HEART 2 HEART

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BETWEEN YOU AND US

The Nerve-Centre of Indian economy, the Shanghai of India, the Most Cosmopolitan City of India, the Stomach of India, the Most Populous Indian City, the Financial Capital of India – the ways to explain Mumbai are as manifold as the skyscrapers in its skyline. And there are good reasons too for this.

More than 40% of the government's corporate tax collections come from this city. The headquarters of India's Central Bank - the Reserve Bank of India, The biggest Stock Exchange of India [BSE], and the corporate head offices of at least two hundred thousand companies are all positioned in this city. No wonder, when the city became a sheet of water on the 26th – 27th July, 2005 by an unprecedented and unthinkable world record rainfall of 94.4 cms, it was a calamity not of Mumbai alone.

It was a national disaster. For, Mumbai city, with only 0.015% of India's land area, contributes 5% of India's total GDP (Gross Domestic Product). Nay, it was an international disaster, many say, as $5 billion is what international investors have pumped into this most commercial capital of India and there are a billion eyes on this city every moment.

The Mumbai deluge did not affect only the people of low lying areas or the 50% of population that lives in the slums and shanty towns. All the 17 million people of Mumbai were affected, some very pathetically, some less. With the government declaring a two-day holiday, the situation only became worse. There was distress and despair everywhere and a great need to render help and solace. And this is what the Sai workers in Mumbai did. And they did it marvelously. For example, on a single day alone on the 7th of August, more than 8000 people were given medical help and more than 6000 food packets were distributed all over Mumbai.

"The spirit of selfless service of the Sai workers, conducting camps day in and day out for week after week…not bothered about their meals or personal needs, was truly inspiring," says Dr. Agarwal, who along with his wife, was sent by Swami to Mumbai to render medical help along with the Sai workers.

What exactly was the work that the Sai workers carried out? How did Swami come to the rescue of these dedicated workers? Why did it flood in Mumbai, in the first place? And what does Swami say about this? Was it not a natural disaster? Can it really be prevented? To find answers to all these and much more, read our cover story.

The Education Minister of UAE, Shaikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, visited Prashanthi Nilayam on the 28th of Aug, 2005. You will find pictures of this and a detailed report of the human vales conference that was held in Dubai a few months ago in our feature article. It also carries a letter of appreciation from the Sultanate of Oman for the SAI (Serve and Inspire Group) consisting of Sai devotees for their wonderful work.

There is a lot happening in the gulf states. We also have an essay competition again on human values, conducted for school children by Sai devotees in the miscellaneous section. In the same section, you will also find the transcription of a very scintillating talk given by Mrs. Geeta Mohan Ram, a long time devotee of Swami, in the US and a wonderful pictorial report of "Walk for Values" organized in Canada every year by Sai devotees.

If the month of August was very eventful in Prashanti Nilayam with the Conference of Eminent Educationists on Educare and the Alumni Meet of all MBA students of Swami's Institute, the month of September is going to be even more exciting. There is an International Medical Conference on the first week of September and then the festivals Ganesh Chaturthi and Onam. Welcoming this, we have a nice article on Ganesha on the feature article section and a beautiful photo album of Swami during festive occasions. Do not miss that.

Before we leave you to walk around this issue, here is some good news. Our Sai Inspires (the daily inspirational email service) subscription is over 3000 now and growing everyday. It really gives us a great sense of fulfillment whenever we read the encouraging responses of devotees. In fact, it only motivates us to stretch ourselves a little more in spreading the message of love and peace of our beloved Swami.

Let everybody live in love and peace.
Let everybody live in Sai.

Loving Regards,
H2H Team
In Sai Service.

SPIRITUAL BLOSSOMS

SATHYA SAI SPEAKS

Be Like the Lotus

Be thankful to the Lord that He gave you Time, as well as action to fill it with. He gave you food, as well as hunger to relish it. But that does not entitle you to engage yourself in action indiscriminately. When you build a house, you install a door in front. What is the purpose of the door? To admit all whom you welcome and to keep out all whom you do not want. It has a double purpose; you do not keep the doors wide open, for all and sundry to come in as and when they like.

So too, select the impulses, the motives, the incentives that enter your mind; keep out the demeaning, the debasing, the deleterious. Admit the highest wisdom of the scriptures, the wisdom culled out of the crucible of experience, called *Anubhavajnaanam.*

All water is not potable; the stagnant pool is to be avoided, the flowing river is better. Select and drink. Use the mosquito curtain, but see that the mosquitoes do not get in when you go to bed. Keep them out; do not imprison them inside the net. Sail in the boat that floats on water but, do not allow the water to enter the boat. Be in worldly life, but do not allow it to get into you. Use the doors intelligently, to let in those whom you want, and keep out those whom you do not need.

The lotus, born in slime and mud, rises up through the water and lifts its head high above the waters; it refuses to get wet though water is the element which gives it life! Be like the lotus. By action, done with all this care, the Vision gets clarified. Man is blinded by the objective world and he believes that world to be real, meaningful and worthy of pursuit. The cataract grows in the eye and robs it of its efficiency. The cataract is the enemy of the eye. Ignorance, the cataract of the inner eye, blinds the intellect and robs it of its efficiency. So, it cannot see the Divinity that is your real nature. It misleads you into the impression that you are a man *(Manava),* whereas you are really God *(Madhava).*

Tread the Path of Liberation

The rope is mistaken to be a snake and the perceiver flees in fear. The truth is, it is not the eye organ that sees; there are many whose eyes are good, so far as doctors can discover, but they cannot see! The eye sees because it is illumined by a microscopic spark of the rays of the sun.

The scripture says: *"Chakshos suryo ajayatha",* meaning, from the eye, the sun was born. The soul is the motive force of all the senses; the eye is but a window through which the soul peeps out at the external world. Of what use is

the eye, when the vision is not correct? That is to say, when you have no *Samadhrishti* (the unity of vision). *Samam* means *Brahman,* the Absolute Reality; *Samadhrishti* means, seeing only *Brahman,* the One, in all things at all times. This *Ekathwam* (Oneness) is the basic truth. All other experiences are partial, distorted, false. Dwell on that, in your meditation. Fix it in your inner consciousness. That is the path of Liberation, which you must start treading and, today is as good a day as any, for deciding to do so. You have meditated too long on riches, status, salary, children, relatives, fame and the standard of living. They are all of minor interest, momentary value, dubious profit. Meditate, fix your urge on the *Nithya,* the *Sathya,* the *Nirmala,* the *Nischala,* that is, the Eternal, the Real, the Pure and the Immovable.

- BABA

CONVERSATIONS WITH SAI BABA - PART 12

(*Continued from the previous issue)*

Hislop: When you go out in the world, very likely you will get married. How will you relate to your wife?

Student: Swami will have given me my wife. Swami is my spiritual father and mother, and in the real sense I am born of Him. He is God, and my wife is not different from Him. He is in her heart also. So I will regard my wife as mother, sister, and God.

Hislop: Well, I have heard that Mother and Father are to be regarded as God. But this is the first time I have heard that one's wife is to be regarded as God. I believe you are going to face some problems in this matter.

SAI: *(To Hislop in Telugu via another student)* Ask him what he will do if his wife says he cannot come to Puttaparthi?

Hislop: You know, sometimes a wife develops a very strong personality and takes command of the family. Suppose such a wife says to you, 'You must not go to Puttaparthi.'

Student: I would not mind. You must know that a diamond has several facets. The largest face, with the most reflective power, represents God. But each smaller facet is of the same diamond. My wife, who represents a smaller facet of the diamond is also God. And my home is Puttaparthi. So I would be content with my Puttaparthi, with God in command.

Hislop: You say God is the diamond and that the brilliance of the largest facet represents Him. Suppose Swami says 'Come to Puttaparthi' and your wife says ‘Do not go.’

Student: It is God that I obey, not the wife as such. I would go to Puttaparthi.

SAI: (*In another aside to Hislop*) Ask him what if his wife says she would leave him.

Hislop: The wife is one body and mind. Swami is another. The wife has her independent viewpoint. You tell her 'I will go to Puttaparthi. You may stay here.' But wife says to you, 'You will not find me when you return. I will leave you.'

Student: Such a wife is not my wife. I would go to Puttaparthi. She may go according to her own decision.

SAI: Ask the boys some questions *(the college boys were outside in the compound circled around Sai)*.

Hislop: *(to student)* What do you want?

Student: I want Swami.

Hislop: I mean after you graduate and go out into life.

Student: I want Swami.

Hislop: Who is Swami?

Student: He is Love. He is God.

Hislop: Where is Swami?

Student: In my heart.

Hislop: Then Swami is in your heart and you already have Swami. What do you want to do in life - doctor, lawyer, Prime Minister?

Student: I will do as Swami tells me to do.

Hislop: Who is Hislop?

Student: He is Swami.

Hislop: Then why do you not say 'I want Hislop?'

Student: Hislop is a small portion of Swami, whereas Swami is God in full.

SAI: *(laughing)* Hislop is a big tall man, where as Swami is a small one, about 5 feet tall.

Hislop: How do you know that Swami is God?

Student: I see He is God.

Hislop: But you see Swami's body. How do you see Him as God?

Student: We have confidence that He is God.

Hislop: Where is God?

Student: God is everywhere.

Hislop: When you look at that tree, what do you see?

Student: I see God.

Hislop: How does this faith arise that God is everywhere?

Student: There is some small experience of Swami. Then there is faith.

SAI: No. Faith comes first and then experience. Students must not only know the answers to questions. The answers must be in the conduct of their lives, and on this basis they must teach others. Faith is natural to each person. Each person has some faith in himself, some confidence in himself. And the core of his being, of himself, is *Atma*. From this comes the foundation of faith in himself.

A small example. One does not remember his birth and his mother tells him the date. He does not know by himself, but through faith he accepts what mother says. Father may not have been present at the event, but mother gave birth. She does not need to ask anyone. Some reflection will indicate that for the coming into being of the universe there must also be a basis. God is that basis. He knows. He need not ask anyone. In that subtle area, beyond body and intellect, only faith can exist. Faith is naturally with each person, and so also is love. Love is directed to various objects and to various persons, but love of God is the essential factor. Looking at that tree we note that the many branches, leaves and twigs have the one trunk as the factor common to all of them. The trunk, in turn, relies on the roots. To try to water each leaf and each branch would take much time, and the water would be wasted. But if we direct all the water to the roots of the tree, then each branch and leaf and twig will naturally receive moisture in the way that is best for it. As it is now, people say they love friends and relatives but do not love God. God is the basis of all the individuals. He is the Root from which all have their being. It is best to love God first and to love Him with all one's heart. Then your love will naturally include the various individuals.

Hislop: Swami, when the college boys give speeches they say that Swami gives them the words. Can this be correct?

SAI: Sai gives them confidence. With confidence the words arise automatically. *(To a college boy)* What do you want when you finish college?

Student: I want only to merge with Swami.

SAI: Now the *Avatar* has taken a body to revive *Dharma*. He is here, engaged in that. So what is all this talk of immortality and merging? Your whole life is before you. First, find out what is the purpose of this life. If God Himself is here to foster *Dharma* and you engage yourself in the same task then you are worshipping Him. Then you are near and dear to Him, for you are serving Him, His devotees, and yourself.

(On another occasion)

Hislop: *(at Prashanti Nilayam)* Swami, what is that new construction on the other side of the sheds?

SAI: That is an oil pressing plant. Farmers in this area can bring their groundnuts and press out the oil free of charge.

Hislop: I had heard that Swami was making a cottage industry for the villagers in these large sheds, but I did not know about the farmers.

SAI: The *Gokulam* is also a model dairy to show the farmers. The cottage industry is to free the villagers from their poverty by showing them how to work and have an income from work.

Hislop: That large shed beside the new High School that Swami is building, what is that for?

SAI: There the students may learn skills to help them in a practical way. How to fix machines, carpentry, electricity, plumbing, construction of buildings and so on.

Hislop: Will that be a feature of all the schools that Sai builds?

SAI: Yes. Girls will learn sewing and household skills.

(To be continued)

CHINNA KATHA

The Three Best Things

A king used to ask three questions to all the people who came to him. The first question was, **'Who is the best person?'** The second was: **'What is the best time?'** and the third, **'What is the best of all actions?'**

The king was very anxious to know the answers to these questions. One day, he went to the forest and was moving about the hills and plains. He saw an ashram (hermitage) and wanted to take some rest there. By the time the king reached the ashram, a hermit was watering some plants.

The hermit saw that the king was rather tired, stopped watering the plants, ran up to the king and gave him some fruits and cool water.

At that time, a man was brought to the ashram by another hermit with wounds all over his body. As soon as the hermit saw this, he went to the man, cleaned his wounds and gave him some herbs which would cure the wounds. He was also speaking sweet words to console him.

The king then wanted to express his gratitude and take leave of him. The hermit blessed the king, but the king was still troubled by his three questions and wished to see if the hermit could enlighten him.

The hermit stated that the answers to the three questions were contained in the actions which the king had witnessed in the ashram.

The hermit said that when the king came to the ashram he was watering the plants and that was his duty. On seeing the king the hermit had given up his duty and had come to the king, giving him fruit and water. This was in accordance with correct traditions, as the king was his guest.

While relieving the king of his thirst and suffering, another injured individual had come to the ashram and therefore the hermit had given up the duty of serving the king and had gone to the other man and had begun to serve him.

Whoever comes seeking service from you is the best individual at that time.

Whatever satisfaction you can give him by serving him will be the best work you can do.

The present, when you can do something, is the most sacred of all times.

- BABA

COVER STORY

MUMBAI DELUGE AND DIVINE GRACE

The tale of how there was a deluge of Sai Seva after the deluge of relentless rains that shattered Mumbai on the 26th – 27th July, 2005.

"As we spent seven days, attending various medical camps, dispensing little bottles of pills, the immensity of the calamity hit home - the long lines of people waiting patiently for medicines to save them from the deadly epidemic that was breaking out in the wake of the rains, the smiles on their faces as they received a few kilos of grains, and their gratitude as they clutched new pieces of clothing. But what struck a chord was the spirit of selfless service with which the Sai volunteers worked – their energy, despite conducting camps day in, day out for two weeks was an inspiration!" recounts Dr. Agarwal, who was there in Mumbai after the disaster for a week to serve along with the Sai workers there as Swami's special envoy.

"*And our Lord Sai watched over them*," Dr. Agarwal continues*, "as they doled out pills after pills, bottles after bottles of medicines without bothering about their personal needs, the risk of contracting disease, or whether it was time for them to eat a meal. Their attitude was, 'Whatever we do is not enough, so keep on working….working harder.' And so they did, with Swami's Name constantly on their lips and a silent prayer in their hearts for Him to overlook their human errors and 'to take care' and so He did...*"

Yes, He did. And in so many beautiful ways. When the city often touted as the Shanghai of India turned into a city of distress and despair, the Sai workers submerged themselves in the ocean of service (the above description was only a drop). They were busy alleviating pain and bringing smiles on the faces of the affected and the anxious. Medical camps were on for days and nights, week after week, simultaneously with other service activities.

Before we give you more thrilling stories of how the Sai workers reached out to every corner of Mumbai, and more interestingly, how our beloved Swami rescued them and guarded them every moment, let's have a quick look at the city of Mumbai on the 26th of July 2005 – the day the never-at-rest-for-a-second city of India, stumbled and came to a total stand still.

Mumbai Stops!

26th of July - it was the day when the financial capital of India, which contributes over Rs. 58,000 crore (US$13.3 billion) in revenue to the central government of India every year was totally numb. Its citizens - shocked and shattered. Its infrastructure - pathetically paralyzed. It was a day of great trial for the populace of Mumbai.

What initially seemed as the beginning of a normal work day in the monsoon season was by the end of the day probably the most traumatic the people of Mumbai (Mumbaikars) had ever gone through. The mayhem caused by the unprecedented rains in the 24-hour period from 8.30 am on July 26th to 8.30 am on July 27th, 2005 – an incredible 944.2 mm rainfall in the city's suburbs which houses the majority of the city's population - was unimagined and indescribable. It was truly frightening.

It broke the world record rainfall in 24 hours much of this falling within a 12-hour period, to the city's horror. And as if this was not enough, the Arabian Sea was at a high tide at precisely the same period. It was like asking Vatican City (the world's smallest state with only 0.2 square miles) to handle the business of New York and Washington combined.

As a result, everything dreaded happened. It was the city's wildest unimaginable nightmare. Houses collapsed, entire suburban areas went under water and carcasses of bloated animals floated on the street.

Drainage water overflowed and mixed with the rainwater on the street. And rainwater hurled garbage and dirt onto the roads and lanes.

Hardly an hour since the start of the deluge and the ubiquitous cell phones of Mumbai, which never know what is rest or sleep, were powerless and dead. And just when Mumbaikars thought that it was the last of their problems, the lights went out. Large swathes of the suburbs were left groping in the dark (Power supply to several suburbs was switched off to prevent short circuits and electrocution).

…Some More Glimpses of the Havoc

A trip from Nariman Point, the city's business hub, to Bandra, which usually takes 45 minutes, now took over 8 hours. Railway tracks between Ambarnath, Dombivili and Badlapur were under eight inches of water – one could have easily mistaken the railway station to be a river! The Lepers' Colony along the railway tracks at Dahisar was fully submerged.

A Mumbai-bound college teacher waiting in Frankfurt to board the Lufthansa flight LH-756 did not know what to do. The Mumbai airport – the busiest in the country - was searching for its air strip. There was now only a sheet of water. All flights were cancelled or rescheduled.

The city's lifeline - its suburban local train service - ground to a complete halt. It was a forced brake on the always-on-the-move life of Mumbai.

Jaya, like thousands of other Mumbaikars, walked for hours until she found a cab. The cab only took her a partial distance. After further wading through neck high water and walking through slush and mud, she finally arrived home after 27 hours of effort.

Another Mumbaikar, Pramod, stayed back in his office until the next day. On finally reaching his home he found his house and the surrounding area submerged. His family's whereabouts were unknown. He walked back for hours searching for a vacant room in a guesthouse.

Residents of the suburb of Thane, who were working in the city, started getting calls about their homes being flooded since the morning but could do nothing…they were stuck in the island city…many parents did not know where their children were…and the list goes on. Every Mumbaikar has a unique harrowing tale to tell of the trials of that day.

And the damage was not restricted to Mumbai alone. For example, at least 100 people died in their sleep at Jui village in Raigad district of Maharastra, when a landslide hit 43 houses at 8pm on the 25th July. And as many as 12 villages in Sangli district were inundated and over 6,500 people evacuated as the waters of the River Krishna rose above the danger mark. And in Kolhapur district, 40 villages were marooned. And so on goes the depressing story.

To sum it up, according to a leading Indian weekly -

1,000 people died in the state of Maharashtra of which Mumbai city alone accounted for over 400.
200 billion rupees was the loss in Mumbai alone, let alone the other parts of Maharastra.
15-20 billion rupees worth of preliminary insurance claims were filed in the immediate aftermath of the floods.

Why the Mayhem in Mumbai?

Yes, the destruction and the damage was depressing and demoralizing, to say the least. But, "Why Mumbai?" as some Mumbaikars started asking once they were back home and life was somewhat normal.

"Was it only the coincidence of exceptionally heavy rains and the high tide?"

Some remarked, "OK… it poured like mad, but why did the water take so long to recede? The sea is just next door!"

"Was it all the anger of the Gods? Was it a purely natural disaster? Is there anything more to it?" Mumbai's inhabitants were seeking answers.

The answer is: Yes, there is certainly more to it. In fact, a lot more. And there are many lessons to be learnt too.

What Swami Says About Such Calamities?

First and foremost is this: **God never punishes. He cannot but only help**. It is the flaw in our actions that is responsible for our miseries. As Swami said on Sep 25th, 2000,

> *"The world is losing its ecological balance, as man, out of utter selfishness, is robbing the mother Earth of her resources like coal, petroleum, iron, etc. As a result, we find earthquakes, floods and such other devastating natural calamities. Human life will find fulfillment only when ecological balance is maintained."*

If you have read the first line carefully, you will notice the words 'utter selfishness' of man – that is the catchphrase, the bottom line. The fitting example of the Mithi River, which flows through the centre of the island on which Mumbai City is located, is probably, by now, well known as it was widely reported. But we cannot resist reiterating it here for it is representative of what went wrong.

Once a River, Now a Drain

The Mithi River, once used for transportation and fishing, is today only a filthy stream, thanks to the people who use it as an open drain, the factories which dump industrial waste and garbage unchecked. Besides unauthorised hazardous is also waste dumped into it by all and sundry.

The Mithi River once acted as a natural safety valve carrying excess rainwater into the sea and absorbing seawater at times of high tide. It was nature's gift to Mumbai. But today the situation is pretty dismal, you will see. In the words of Prof B. Arunachalam, eminent geographer and author of "Mumbai by Sea",

> *"Mumbai, in its hurry to grow and add support systems, has been tinkering with nature. Thus, when the Mumbai Airport work began in the 1950s, the authorities had no hesitation in diverting the natural course of Mithi River. Some of the worst hit areas (the Kalina area) during the recent rains were situated along what should have been the Mithi River course."*

Even the spanking Bandra Kurla complex was built on land reclaimed by diverting the Mithi River. And Mumbai paid for this flagrant indifference to nature when the Mithi River overflowed, carrying with it all the filth dumped into it.

In all the areas around the existing route of the river the water rose suddenly and to a staggering 15ft! People trapped in cars drowned. Even those on top of buses were scared. And the ground floors of many housing colonies were inundated. The greed of builders and developers and the blind eye turned by successive governments to the violations of the coastal zone regulations was something that was highlighted beyond a shadow of doubt by this patently avoidable and self-inflicted catastrophe.

In violation of these same regulations, 7000 acres of mangroves had been cut down for construction activities by private players in the Versova-Malad belt. And flouting every line from the rule book, buildings had been constructed within 500m of the high tide line. We know the important role woods play in

containing water and keeping soil intact, and thereby preventing floods and landslides.

Mumbai's 150 Year Outmoded Drainage System

Then, of course, is the much talked about drainage system in Mumbai, which stands as a symbol of the city's pitiable infrastructure. You cannot expect a 2 year old to carry a 100 kg load on his head and that is what the 150 year antiquated Mumbai's drainage system was asked to do. And as expected it collapsed.

It was equipped to carry only 2.5 cm of rain every hour. The 94.4 cm of rain on July 26th naturally beleaguered it beyond limits. And the size of Mumbai's population, which had more than doubled in less than twenty years to 16 million, actually made mockery of the old and tired city drainage system.

The woes of the average citizen were compounded as the government had declared a two-day holiday. Thus, the state machinery's response was delayed and the common man was left to fend for himself.

The bomb-blasts that rocked the city in 1993 were, no doubt, a man-made disaster. The Mumbai demon of a deluge too was to a large extent, man-made, if seen in a proper perspective.

If only the Mithi River was allowed to flow its natural course, if only people respected plantations and forests, if only the drainage system was upgraded well before time, if only a proactive disaster management programme was up and running, then probably it would have been just another beautiful, refreshing rainy day for Mumbai citizens.

The Undying Spirit of Mumbai

Yes, Mumbai drowned but the spirit of Mumbai soared.

"The first-hand experiences of various people we met were an eye-opener," says Dr. Agarwal, *"People who had lost absolutely everything of their own (except the clothes they had on) were happily helping their friends and neighbours and that included strangers. We had never encountered such unity and solidarity amongst people. Later we learnt that this is the ever living spirit of Mumbai – unbelievable until you witness it and experience it in action yourself. Well we did!"* And instances to prove this are galore.

John D' Souza, 54, an orphan brought up by a convent school, was tragically washed away while rescuing schoolchildren - that is, **after he was responsible for saving 10 lives**. And as a Mumbai resident recalls, *"I still remember an incident when there was no one to dig a grave in the cemetery. John was the only one to help us; he dug three graves. Even the police of the nearby area respected him; they were also present for the funeral."* His funeral, no wonder, was attended by more than 200 people.

Amol, who reached his home after wading for 23 hours through water recollects, *"One instance that brought a smile to my face was when I saw an old lady, who was completely drenched, standing near the Sion flyover and distributing biscuits to passers-by. I was touched and was motivated to walk further…and then in Maitri Park, I saw a bhaji pav (a Mumbai delicacy) vendor, giving bhaji pav to the tired and hungry passers-by for free… I would like to remember it as a day when I saw the undying spirit of every Mumbaikar."*

And Theresa, a school teacher, who at the risk of her life almost broke her neighbour's door to save their little daughter from drowning. It is a day, she says, *"which I will never forget for the rest of my life."*

Then there is the story of five men who got down on their knees to open a gutter, removed the dirt, cleaned it and ensured the water drained away. This was just when the water had invaded into the ground floors of buildings in St. Baptist Road and was climbing up the stairs. T**hese men guarded the open gutter in turns, for three whole days to ensure nobody fell into it and also made sure that it remained unblocked by debris.**

There is also the story of Hemant who broke open the door of a clinic to save all the workers and a mentally challenged boy who were trapped inside. He thus saved at least 6 lives.

The stories of such unexpected Samaritans are many - people going out of their way and opening their doors for strangers, serving hot food, drinks and giving shelter when their own ground floor is flooded; citizens opening their toilets for the public; young boys risking their lives to save people stranded in buses and trains; and people enthusiastically distributing fruits, biscuits and water to anyone and everyone who was stranded.

Every cloud has a silver lining and this was Mumbai's silver lining. And this has been the case whenever disaster has struck this vibrant city – its citizens have demonstrated amazing bravery and stirring sympathy. It was as if the whole city was actually one family united by common suffering.

The Deluge of Sai Service

Inside this big family was the small but significant Sai family who just like other good-hearted people took every opportunity to serve their fellow brothers and sisters.

Way back in February 1966, Swami had said,

> *"Life is best spent alleviating pain, assuaging distress, and promoting peace and joy. The service of man is more valuable than what you call 'service to God'. God has no need of your service. If you please man, you please God. When you serve man, you serve God."*

And the Sai devotees in Mumbai did just that.

Dr. Asha Damodaran who coordinated a lot of service activities, says,

> *"**As soon as the programme of relief work for the deluge affected areas consisting of medical camps, food and clothes distribution was announced at the Navi Mumbai Zone, there was another deluge – a deluge of Sevadal workers wanting to contribute in whichever way they could.** There was a sea of people (Sevadals) of all ages, both sexes and from various strata of society at "Sai Prem" our Navi Mumbai center wanting to help in which ever manner they could.*
>
> *In fact, it was disappointing for some not to be included in the medical team. Food packets, clothes and medicines started pouring in. Sevadals were busy without any thought for their own health, comforts or convenience. It was indeed heartening to see all this."*

Offering Food Packets, Offering Love

And so, within two days after the Terrible Tuesday of 26th July, Sai devotees organized themselves into different groups and panned out to every accessible area of Mumbai which needed help and care.

Their focus was first to provide food. Food packets containing mainly rice, pulses, sugar, turmeric, wheat flour and other small items like candles, and a match box, etc. were made.

More than 1,500 food packets were produced and distributed in one day, thanks to 50 Sai volunteers who worked the whole night in "*Sai Prem*", New Mumbai, putting together all the items into neat packs.

The food packing area was later shifted to Worli, Old Mumbai, for ease of distribution as it was closer to the affected areas. And here again, 50 Sai workers worked from nine in the morning to twelve in the night for six continuous days, preparing 12,000 food packets.

Dr. Asha, recalling the initial days after the deluge, says,

> *"Physical ailments like respiratory infections, gastro intestinal infections and of course, skin infections due to feet being immersed in water for hours were common. There was no epidemic of malaria or dengue or leptospirosis at that time. But there was enough emotional distress, people having lost their loved ones, fees kept for the child or money saved for medical treatment, all their possessions having been washed away or water logged. There were some not so poor, who felt embarrassed to seek social help as their every possession had been washed away and they did not have even a change of*

clothing. A sympathetic ear and a kind word were indeed helpful then along with the food packets, medicines and clothes."

And the Sai workers did not merely distribute food packets, those packets were, in fact, tokens of love, carefully packed and lovingly presented. From each region of Mumbai a dozen volunteers carried these packets of love and reached out to every shattered slum and every affected small lane of Mumbai to give, nay, offer it to the hungry and the deprived.

Sai Medical Seva in Time Saves Nine

As important as food was medical attention to the affected people. In the initial days after the deluge, as Dr. Asha mentioned, there were only respiratory and gastro intestinal infections, but the epidemic was germinating. The outbreak of leptospirosis and dengue epidemic was one of the most terrible aftermaths of the tragic Mumbai rains. While leptospirosis was contracted from rat urine in water, dengue was caught from infected mosquitoes.

And here the Sai Organisation of Mumbai played a very proactive role.

To take this head on and prevent the spread of the epidemic, the Sai Organization conducted numerous medical camps spread all over Mumbai. Free medicines and injections were supplied and devotee doctors moved from one place to another with their teams to provide help and treatment.

It is a well-acknowledged fact that the administration of epidemic-preventive injections and medicines like Anti-Typhoid and Tetanus by Sai workers is what prevented the epidemic from taking alarming proportions in many areas of Mumbai.

There were medical camps conducted in Kalamboli, New Panvel, Palshet, Gadeshwar, Shiravali, among several other places. Just to give an instance, here again we have Dr. Asha Damodar, who was very much involved in the camps, giving us insights into the *Seva* done,

"We went deep into the tribal areas of Yermal and Bannechivadi and conducted our camp inside a small hutment with just 4 (one doctor and 3 sevadals) of us. We managed to attend to over 150 patients. This was a really needy place as the nearest primary medical facility was a minimum of one hour walking distance, with broken roads, no transport facility and of course no money to pay the doctor's fees.

There was a lady ill and pregnant, paralyzed below the legs having been beaten by her husband… there were men suffering from high fever and others suffering from loose motions and vomiting. Nobody bothers about these people. But for Swami's help who could have helped these people in far off places? Needless to say the villagers felt grateful that we thought of them. We developed good rapport with them. As much their poverty hits

you, their addiction to alcohol and tobacco saddens you. There is so much to be done in these areas."

The Sai workers did a lot - not only for the people of these areas but for the entire state of Maharashtra.

In the Navi Mumbai zone alone, more than 2,500 patients were attended to during the first week of August. The number was much more in the Kurla-Kalina region, the most affected area of Mumbai, with 50 doctors working round the clock. The numbers keep adding up when we include all the major zones where Seva was conducted in the entire state of Maharashtra.

The Incredible Make-Shift Hospital

Dr. Janaki, a very dedicated devotee doctor, who was the motivational force behind several camps, comments,

"Can you believe it? The whole of Kalina area was submerged with 6ft of water, but in my hospital (Prashanti Medical Centre) in the same area, there was not a drop of water! All the patients were safe and the expensive instruments were just fine! True to its name, it had become an abode of peace.

The very next day itself I felt as if Swami is just instructing me to do things. All our volunteers converged and began our series of service activities. We went to the worst affected slum areas distributing emergency medicines, food, clothing and blankets in our ambulance. All our doctors, volunteers and paramedical staff were delighted, to say the least, to see smiles back on the faces of the affected people.

A week passed, and the affected people started having fever and many were dying due to lack of medical facilities. All the hospitals were full. And so, through His inspiration, we hit upon the idea to start an emergency ward. It was not going to be easy; in fact, we were wondering will it come about? It did happen. But it was not because we got some brilliant ideas, but because it was He who arranged everything for us. Unbelievably, in one day, a well equipped mini hospital was ready. It was now open 24 hrs a day and there were doctors, nurses and paramedical staff stretching themselves beyond limits to attend to anybody who came at any time of the day, whatsoever. We also gave many preventive medications like Tetanus and Typhoid vaccines. By His grace, there was no shortage of medicines or dearth of resources."

So, that was the story of how Dr. Janaki started the new makeshift nursing home in Kadamwadi, in east Santa Cruz area of Mumbai. At least 800

patients were treated in six days from the 17th to 22nd August here and more than 650 typhoid injections were administered by Dr. Janaki's team.

Dr. Agarwal, who saw Dr. Janaki at work, says, *"It was a demonstration of our Lord's most important teaching being put into practice – Love all, Serve all".* If you ask Dr. Janaki she replies, *"I am not the doer, it is He."*

A Day of Intense Seva

Though there was *Seva* going on right from day one of the tragedy, on the 7th of August, the Mumbai Sai Organisation, organized camps on a very large scale after making a very comprehensive survey for almost a week. On that day they organised medical camps simultaneously in eight principal regions of Mumbai, namely, the regions of Sion Wadala, Chembur, Mulund, Bail Bazar, Malad, Kandivili, Borivili and Dahisar. More than 8,000 patients were rendered medical help by devotee doctors who were ably assisted by hundreds of Sai workers.

While this was going on about 6,000 food packets were distributed simultaneously to all needy people in these regions. In Pandharpur zone, 4,000 *rotis* (pancakes) with *sabji* (curry) were distributed continuously for 24 hours on this day, apart from the service done on other days.

On the same day in the Kurla-Kalina region, where people only had four walls for a house and had lost all their possessions, utensils, appliances, clothes, books, etc. - whatever was necessary - were distributed to the affected people. And all the 650 schoolchildren got blankets, bed sheets, mattresses and notebooks.

One Sai worker said,

> *"The distress stories of dear ones being lost, some people being miraculously saved, of people losing all their possessions, were indeed heartrending."*

And to give them emotional and spiritual strength, Sai workers gave them Swami's photo and *Vibhuti* as *Prasad* while asking them to have faith in God and prayer.

The Sai Workers and the Bankers

One important fact that must be mentioned is this: working in tandem with the Sathya Sai Seva Organisation was the HDFC Bank – one of India's leading private banks and the State Bank of India (SBI) – India's largest bank.

These corporate giants not only contributed generously to the Maharashtra Sai Organisation but also joined hands with the organization in all its endeavours.

In the words of Ms. Sushma Barve, a SBI officer who distributed food packets along with the Sai workers, "*I am proud to be an employee of State Bank of India now after this opportunity to work with the Sai Organisation.*"

And in fact, it was the SBI who approached the Sai Organization first, offering huge amounts because of their tremendous trust and confidence in Sai workers.

HDFC refused many other non-governmental organizations, and sanctioned a big amount solely to the Sai Organisation. For, in the words of Mr. Puri, MD of HDFC, "*If I give Rs. 100,000 to the Sai Organisation, they will put another Rs. 10,000 to see that the Rs. 100,000 is spent judiciously".*

Seva Beyond Mumbai

The damage, as we know, was not restricted to Mumbai alone, and Sai Seva too went beyond Mumbai. There were medical camps conducted in Dasgaon. In Mahad Taluka, where 50 people were buried alive and many houses destroyed due to a massive landslide, the Sai workers constructed temporary housing for all the unfortunate people in the Kosabi/Rawalgaon area.

In Sangli-Satara zone which included areas like Sikli, Sanwad, Danwad, Bastewad, Kurundwad, Chitrapur and Rajapur, medical camps and food grain distribution were held for four days from 6th to 9th August, 2005. Additionally, much relief activity was carried out in Pandharpur.

How the Sai Workers Served

The passion with which the Sai workers served, the kind of areas they visited - the most filthy and dreaded slums - the smile with which they went about doing their work and the way these volunteers were received, was something to be seen to be believed.

It was not for ostentation. It was not for personal glory. **It was done with the one aim of serving Sai. The Sai who is within each one in distress**.

Swami says,

> *"Be alert to the call everywhere, at all times; be ready with a smile, a kind word, a useful suggestion, some well-informed help, a pleasant reply. Look for chances to relieve, rescue or resuscitate… Service to society is the primary duty. Concern for the welfare of all is devotion."*

For the *Sevadals* of Mumbai, it was their duty, their devotion and worship. It was very heartening to see Sai workers who were once upon a time slum children now serving the citizens of Mumbai non-stop day and night. These were the children adopted from a slum by a Sai worker years ago and now groomed into respectable citizens. Once upon a time on the receiving end,

these workers were now serving the citizens of Mumbai with great sincerity and devotion to Sai.

In the words of one service coordinator,

> *"Our sevaks experienced sheer Divine Presence when food packages were being distributed from door to door, as the people welcomed them as if it was Swami at their doorstep. Truly, when nature hits thousands, God's Grace saves millions."*

When humanity is faced with tragedy, it is God's opportunity to provide solace and succor. **Those who are lucky enough to serve alone know what an exhilarating experience it is to be an instrument of the divine.** And those 'helped' always remember the touch of the divine that came to them in their pain and time of acute need.

Ask any Sai worker and he (or she) will tell you - Sai was always with him (or her). In fact, one Sai worker recounts,

> *"Along with the medicines we gave them Swami's photo and Vibhuti and asked them to pray fervently and sincerely when in distress. And on our next visit, some villagers reported that the dangerously rising water level receded after they prayed to Swami."*

Indeed, Sai is there everywhere for everybody ready to help. The Sai devotees know it better than anybody else. And every devotee has an account of how Swami saved his/her life and property. Take the case of Mr. Aklekar, for instance.

Sai - Their Saviour

When **Mr. Kumar Aklekar** realized that the deluge was endangering his family in Andheri, he rushed home. He sent his children to a place of safety higher up the building, while he and his wife, Sheetal stayed back in their home. As the waters in the flat rose, they moved their television, computers and other valuables to higher floors within the premises. The roads were already flooded. There was more than 5 feet of water. He could see his car submerged. The water had climbed up to nearly three feet inside their flat. He and Sheetal sat on the kitchen platform the whole night praying and reciting "*Sai Gayatri*" (a *Vedic* composition on Sai). The water was gushing into their flat. It did not look like the rain would ever stop.

The room had a life size picture of Swami placed three and a half feet above the ground. Sheetal mentioned to Kumar in a frightened tone that the water level should not rise to touch Swami's photograph. The water level started rising further. They were tense and terrified. The water initially rose but then stopped to their utter disbelief. It stopped just three inches below Swami's life-size photograph, which as we know, was three and a half feet above ground

level. This was all the more miraculous as the water rose five feet in their neighbour's home on the very same floor!

The Aklekars spent the next two days cleaning their home from the residual mud. And to their great surprise and joy on Thursday (the third day after the deluge) Swami assured them of His presence at all times as *Amrita* (holy nectar) started dripping from His photograph, as if to say, *"I am always here, why fear!"*

The Stunning Case of Dr. Janaki

The case of Dr. Janaki is even more stunning. In her own words,

> *"On the 26th of July, as I returning home from my clinic, I saw the road in front was flooded. I took a detour and that did not help either. Every road was submerged. I was in the car and saw the water rising in the car inch by inch. At this moment… I felt somebody telling me to get out of the car. I obeyed the divine command instantaneously and I stepped out of the car.*
>
> *And as I had abandoned the car, I saw a gentleman standing right there with an umbrella as though waiting for me! He was kind and took me inside a hall on the first floor of a building. I realized later that it was St Stanishlaus church. When I looked back, my car was nowhere to be seen. In a minute, it had become submerged into the flood.*
>
> *The fathers in the church were very nice and served me with food and drinks. By midnight rains had reduced. I thought of walking back home. As I stepped out, the water was still up to my shoulders. I started walking and it took me 2 hrs to reach home that night. It was as if Swami was holding me in the dark and guiding me all the time."*

But the story does not end here, the best part is, as Dr. Janaki says,

> *"When I went to pick up my car which was submerged in water for two whole days and switched on the ignition - hold your breadth - it started! The most miraculous thing I have ever witnessed,"* she signs off.

Truly, when you do God's work, God does your work much more efficiently and effectively that you would have ever imagined and looks after every need.

Many depended on Swami and cried out for help on that terrible day and everyone has a moving tale – some heart-warming, some inspiring, some stunning, some illumining - to tell.

How was Gayatri Saved?

Let's now hear what happened to Gayatri Nambiar, a former Bal Vikas (EHV for children) student of New Mumbai.

Currently studying for her Chartered Accountancy final exams, Gayatri had been for an audit at Vashi, in New Mumbai. It had already started raining heavily when she left the office at about 4.30 p.m. for her home at Dadar (central Mumbai). She silently started praying to Swami. It was not going to be easy to reach home safely. Praying and depending on Swami was something that had been inculcated in her since her Bal Vikas days.

She went to the bus stop but found no buses running. Her journey home would normally take one and a half hours. But what was she to do now? Caught in this terrible predicament, she could only think of her beloved Lord. The *Sai Gayatri* was on her lips now.

A few minutes passed. A car stopped in front of her. The owner, to her surprise, offered her a lift. The car was going towards her home, she found out. A few others also jumped in taking the kind offer. The roads were pretty bad and Gayatri's silent chanting became only more vigorous. They traveled for nearly half an hour. After that the car just did not move. In front was a flood and a terrible traffic jam. The car lay stranded on top of a flyover at Ghatkopar. The only option was to walk the rest of the journey.

Meanwhile, at home, Sujana, Gayatri's mother, was worried. There was no way of getting in touch with her daughter (Gayatri did not carry a mobile handset). She found out that Gayatri had left the office. Sujana switched on the *Sai Gayatri* cassette and started praying continuously and incessantly. She started writing in the *Nama Likhita* book (writing the Lord's Name with remembrance).

Gayatri had to wade through chest high water for nearly four hours. Every moment she cried out for her Lord and felt Swami's calming and protecting presence. All throughout the journey it was as if Swami was with her every moment. On seeing her at home at 8.45 p.m., her mother broke down. She bowed and thanked Swami profusely.

Gayatri knew neither swimming nor was she familiar with the route. The danger was formidable. Ask her today and she will tell you that it was Swami's Name alone that helped her overcome that perilous journey. In fact she reached home quicker than many others. Her father, who had to travel only half the distance from the same direction, could only return on evening of the next day!

There are as many stories of Swami's protecting hand and His omnipresence as there are stories of destruction and despair. Mr. Pillay's story is yet another vindicating this premise.

God Is Great

Mr. S.B.R. Pillay and his family live on the ground floor of Brindaban Society, a residential housing complex at Thane, a Mumbai suburb. They have a small temple for Swami made of wood (3 ft x 3 ft) mounted on top of a storage cabinet. And Baba's chair was there beside it. In front of this were *Padukas* (divine sandals) blessed by Swami six years ago. The *Padukas* were on a steel plate, which was placed on a wooden stand, 3 inches above floor level, and the stand was draped with a thick silk shawl. They were the family's object of faith and devotion for many years.

When the downpour in Thane was at its worst on July 26th, the complex began flooding. Mr. Pillay, like many other Mumbaikars, was stuck in his office that night. He stayed there the next day too. There was no way he could have moved. He managed to reach his wife and daughter by phone, that too with great difficulty. His daughter told him that the flat was flooded. He asked his wife and daughter to save their belongings and move them out of the reach of the flooding waters. One precious item, however, was completely forgotten by the family - Baba's *Padukas.*

On 27th July (the second day) the surging waters had entered their home by 4.30 p.m. All the hundreds of flats on the ground floor of their complex were flooded. At 5.30 p.m mother and daughter locked the house and went to another Sai devotee's house on the first floor of a neighbouring apartment.

After the telephone conversation with his family, Mr. Pillay suddenly remembered about the *Padukas*. But there was no way that he could contact his home. No infrastructure in the city worked - electronic or otherwise. He was sad, helpless and crestfallen. He spent a sleepless and tearful night in the office and lamented over his forgetfulness. He could only pray to Baba and ask for His forgiveness. And he did this fervently. He did not want the dirty floodwater to touch the divine sandals at any cost.

On 28th morning (the third day), Central Railway begun operating some trains. He rushed home. At 10.30 a.m. with great trepidation he opened the door. The entire room had been flooded up to **8 inches**. He could see the water mark on the storage cabinet beside Baba's chair. But, not a drop of water was on the steel plate on which the *Padukas* rested! The cloth below was fully wet but the *Chandan* and *Kumkum* (turmeric and vermillion marks) on the sandals were intact. Incredibly, the Divine *Padukas* which were kept 3 inches above the floor were saved from the near foot high water level.

He just closed his eyes in disbelief. The Lord had heeded his prayers. Overwhelmed, he did not know how to express his gratitude to his dear Lord. Mr. Pillay, now convinced more than ever of Swami's protecting love and care, notes, *"My Loving Swami seated in our hearts and in our homes is actually the one who runs the show. This I feel is a great lesson in Sai worship for all of us. God is Great – Allah Oh Akbar. Jai Sai Ram!"*

An Opportunity Unparalleled

Mumbaikars were hit by nature, nay, hit by atrocities they knowingly or unknowingly had been committing towards nature which only boomeranged when nature could take it no more. They were confronted with loss and desolation, but at the same time they experienced God's grace and His benediction.

There were lessons to be learnt and parables to be taught. Probably this could be delayed no longer.

When sea water hits the rocks on the shore, the rocks only become more polished. The populace of Mumbai, which is as diverse as India's populace (you will find a part of every state, every region, every religion and every dialect in Mumbai) though shattered, shone with a golden light – the light of solidarity, the light of social unity - which could come about only because Mumbai was twisted, turned and tamed. Just like, as Swami says, pure gold that has to go through the fiercest of fires to dazzle and delight with its jeweled beauty and delicate workmanship.

Mumbaikars suffered, true. But there was also the Golden Helping and Guiding Hand of the Lord. As Dr. Asha Damodar, a long time Sai devotee, vouchsafes,

> *"None of the Sai devotees to the best of my knowledge were affected despite having worked in such miserable circumstances and having taken upon themselves such dreaded tasks. They served with amazing zeal and the youth sacrificed their well earned Sunday rest for doing Seva."*

The calamity, as somebody said, gave the best possible chance for Mumbaikars to learn the lessons of life and one lesson might be what Swami stated many years ago,

> *"Man is suffering because he cannot rid himself of the greed for sense objects and sense pleasures. He knows that he has to give up whatever he earns and collects, sooner or later; but his attachment waxes instead of waning as the years go by."*

Whatever be the pros and cons, gains and pains, of the disaster, most importantly to Sai devotees, and to anyone interested in service, it gave an amazing opportunity to serve, to care, to love and thereby enjoy. As one doctor put it, *"May we get more opportunities where we will be useful to the people and in that manner, please our dear Lord Sai."*

- H2H Team

We would like to thank the following whose inputs helped in the making of this article:

Sri Mukesh Patel, Sri Sudhir Joshi, Dr. Agarwal, Dr. Mahesh Goklani, Mr. L Ganesh, Dr. Janaki, Dr. Asha Damodar and Sri Darshan Kulkarni.

FEATURE ARTICLES

HUMAN VALUES CONFERENCE IN UAE

There have always been exciting developments in the world of Education in Human Values ever since it was started by Baba more than four decades ago. A Conference on Human Values which was held in the campus of Zayed University in Dubai, United Arab Emirates on the 26th of February, 2005 became a momentous occasion. More so because it was a high powered conference and had the patronage of the Minister of Education of UAE, Shaikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan.

Incidentally, Shaikh Nahyan visited Prashanthi Nilayam *ashram* for Baba's *Darshan* on the 28th of Aug, 2005. Swami blessed him with a private audience for almost an hour in the interview room. Here are few glimpses of the distinguished guest's visit -

Continuing with our story on the human values conference, this conference was widely reported in the media and both English and Urdu leading newspapers of the Gulf carried reports of the conference. We have now excerpts from articles that appeared in the ***"Khaleej Times"*** and ***"Gulf Today"*.**

In addition, we also have a letter from the Ministry of Education, Sultanate of Oman, praising the work hitherto carried out by the Serve and Inspire Group (SAI). It is a definite reminder of Swami's universal message and that human values go beyond differences of language, religion or colour.

Here are a few extracts from the "Khaleej Times" newspaper article:

The Education in Human Values Conference held under the patronage of Shaikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Education and President of Zayed University, was held at the Zayed University campus yesterday. (26th Feb, 2005)

In his opening speech, Shaikh Nahyan said: **"This conference on 'Education in Human Values' is being presented as a way to address how the education of young people can help promote values such as peace, truth, and non-violence. These values are also at the core of our country's vision for its present and its future."**

"Today at this conference you will have the opportunity to think about how schools and universities, faculty and staff, curriculum and services, can prepare students to understand and incorporate these universal human values as a basis for living moral, productive, and fulfilling lives."

Presenting her 'Preview to Education in Human Values Programme', Angela Loraine Burrows, International Trainer of Education in Human Values, said:

"We are living in a world of tremendous scientific and technological change. The discoveries in the field of medicine and science and the advancement in the computer industries for example, have transformed the lives of millions of people around the world."

"Despite all these developments, we must ask ourselves: 'Are we any nearer to creating peaceful and harmonious societies for our children to inherit?' The answer is resoundingly 'no'. There is more crime and violence than ever before."

She also said that Education in Human Values is a programme to elicit or draw out the values or goodness from within each child. "Learning should be a joyful and exciting experience, a journey of exploration and discovery," she added.

"Silent sitting is one of the most important techniques, as it is a tool to quieten the mind and acquire peace and serenity. In the past, prayer was an essential part of life for most people, regardless of what culture or religion they came from. Music is a direct way to the heart and besides, there are a very few children who do not enjoy singing. Group singing is an invaluable teaching method that not only brings relaxation and joy into the classroom but is also an excellent tool for stimulating the memory and instilling the child with positive thoughts and feelings."

"If you tell me, I will forget; if you show me I will remember. If you involve me, I will understand. Group activities are the involvement. Story telling is one of the oldest forms of teaching. Education in Human Values is a programme that can be used in any school and with any curriculum. It is the integration of values into all subjects and activities as well as a separate value classes," she explained.

In his speech, Choithram Jethwani, Chairman of Choithram Group, said: "Whoever tries to understand the human values of truth, right conduct, peace, love and nonviolence properly, who practises these values and propagates them with zeal and sincerity, can alone be described as a truly educated person."

Some excerpts from the "Gulf Today" newspaper report:

"The core of the UAE's vision for its present and future are peace, truth, and non-violence", Minister of Education and President of Zayed University (ZU) Sheikh Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahayan said.

Addressing the opening ceremony of a conference on Education in Human Values at ZU's Dubai campus, Sheikh Nahayan also said that comprehensive education is much more than learning from books, computers and professors.

"Total education requires creating and sustaining an environment of integrity, civility, compassion and excellence. In that environment, the

goal is to help students incorporate those values of peace, truth, tolerance and non-violence into all they do," the minister said.

The Education in Human Values conference was hosted by ZU and Serve and Inspire (SAI) Group. The one-day conference was held at ZU's Dubai campus on Saturday.

The opening ceremony was also attended by regional coordinator for Middle East and Gulf countries of SAI Group and chairman of Geebee Group of Companies GB Choithram Jethwani; director of the Institute of SAI Education, Bangkok and director of SAI School, Lodpuri, Thailand, Dr Art-Ong Jumsai; vice president of ZU Dr Hanif Hassan Qassimi; Indian consul general Yesh Sinha, professors and academics from different countries and ZU students.

The conference was presented as a way to address how the education of young people can help promote values such as peace, truth and non-violence, essential values to be inculcated in young people in today's troubled world.

"We strongly believe that useful learning must always be supported by a system of ethics and values. In all our educational programmes, we insist on honesty and integrity, as well as on the need for individuals to take responsibility for their actions," Sheikh Nahayan said.

Sheikh Nahayan also urged UAE students to appreciate "intellectual and social perspectives that are different from their own."

"Education without character, politics without principles, science without humanity and commerce without morality are all not only useless, but positively dangerous," Jethwani said in his speech.

"Whoever tries to understand the human values of truth, right conduct, peace, love and non-violence properly; who practises these values and propagates them with zeal and sincerity, can alone be described as a truly educated person. What the world needs today is neither a new order, a new education, a new system, nor a new society, the remedy lies in man's mind and heart filled with love which should be started from the individual. Nobody can change anybody except him or herself," Jethwani said.

The conference was organized by Serve and Inspire Group (SAI) and attended by businessmen, officials, VIPs, faculty members of Zayed University and managers of different high schools.

And finally here is a very appreciative letter from the Ministry of Education to the SAI Group.

Date: February 28th, 2005.

From:

Mrs. Aisha Ahmed Suweidan Al Blushi,
Deputy Director,
Private Schools Department,
Ministry of Education,
Sultanate of Oman

Dear Mr. Choithram Jethwani,

SUB: Human Values Conference at Sheikh Zayed University, Dubai , UAE.

I would like to thank you most sincerely for your wonderful invitation to the SAI Education in Human Values Conference at Sheikh Zayed University, Dubai, UAE, on Saturday 26th February, 2005.

I would also like to thank you and all the members of the SAI group for all the wonderful support and encouragement that you have given to all the students, teachers, parents and administrators of Private Schools and also to all of us here at the Department of Private Schools, Ministry of Education, Oman.

The two delegates from the Department of Private Schools who attended were full of praise for the conference and really enjoyed the wonderful presentations by all concerned. They were really delighted to meet with Dr. Art-Ong Jumsai, Lorraine Burrows and many other delegates who are all very keen to ensure that human values are inculcated at every level in our constantly changing society. We also very much appreciated that two very dear and close friends from Oman, Mrs. Akila Seetharam and Mrs. Mallika Shetty with whom we have worked so closely were also provided with the opportunity to talk about various aspects of Human Values.

Thank you too for all your wonderful work with the SAI Human Values Open Essay Writing & Poster Making Competitions held every April in Oman. We are very much looking forward to this year's event and would like to take this opportunity to wish you every success with all your endeavors.

The world is very blessed to have people like you working so hard to ensure that the five basic values of Love, Truth, Peace, Right Conduct, and Non-Violence are well and truly embedded in our children's hearts .

Again many, many thanks on behalf of all of us. We very much hope that we can rely on your support in the years ahead.

Yours sincerely,
Mrs Aisha Ahmed Suweidan Al Blushi,

THE REAL CLOSENESS

Through Love and Trust

by Dr. Sara Pavan

Dr. Sara Pavan is an Anaesthesiologist from Australia, who came to Baba in 1980 and has been residing in Prashanti Nilayam since 1993, serving at the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences. He was the editor and publisher of the Australian quartely Sai Journal from its inception till 1992.

Can a disciple die in the Master's presence, that is, when the Master is alive, irrespective of the physical distance? The question is not whether one is in the immediate presence of the Master or far off, but whether one is filled with Love and Trust for the Master. **The real closeness is only through Love and Trust**. Then one can be even on the moon, but the Master will be by your side, the Master will be within oneself. As the disciple's love for the Master deepens, something of the Master - His energies - start melting and merging with the energy of the disciple. The fear of physical distance only reflects the lack of understanding.

The Buddha and His Disciples

Mahakashyap was a true disciple of Lord Buddha and he experienced such real closeness. Each person has his or her individual degree of nearness and dearness, love and trust, towards the Master. Mahakashyap remained in such closeness with the Master all through his life until the Buddha's life ended, when he too left his body, because he could not survive in separation. That is Mahakashyap's uniqueness, his oneness with his Master.

There were other enlightened disciples who did not die with Gautama, the Buddha. When Mahakashyap died, it became a very significant question, whether truly enlightened disciples should also die as had happened to Mahakashyap. One of the disciples, Moggalayan, said:

"I am now living for my Master's Message. Yes, I too died with Him; now He is living in me. This is my way, different to the way of Mahakashyap, who dissolved in Gautama, the Buddha. I have also dissolved, but dying is not going to help anybody. There are so many blind people in the world who need eyes; there are so many people in darkness who need light. I will live... I will live as long as possible, I will live for the Buddha."

Ananda's Elusive Enlightenment

Ananda was of a different kind altogether. He remained unenlightened even though he lived in close proximity to the Buddha for forty-two years. No one could have stayed that close for so long, but Ananda enjoyed such special privileges being the Buddha's first cousin. When Ananda asked the Buddha to

initiate him to become His disciple, he took advantage of his closeness to the Master prior to initiation and laid three conditions, aware of the fact that he would have to do whatever the Master commanded him to do after he became a disciple. Ananda said:

"Right now I am your brother and you are closely related to me. Therefore whatever I say you have to do. Remember the three things I ask of you and don't forget them when I become your disciple."

The three conditions Ananda asked were:

1. That he would always stay with the Master and that He shouldn't be sent anywhere to spread the Message.

2. That the Master would meet anybody he brought along, even in the middle of the night. That this personal privilege would not ever be denied.

3. That he would always sleep in the same room as the Master sleeps, that he would not be moved away from the Master even in sleep.

The Buddha gave His promise, and these three conditions were adhered to fully all through the years. But Ananda did not become enlightened. One could understand Ananda's pain and anguish because those disciples who had come long after him became enlightened, while he remained in his ignorance just as he was before.

Ananda wondered, what would become of him when the Buddha passed away? Although he had been with the Master for so long, day in and day out, twenty-four hours a day, he did not become enlightened. Without the Master around he felt he would have no hope whatsoever. However, the Buddha explained to Ananda the reasons for his failure, and how His departure would bring the change:

"You don't understand the dynamics of life. Perhaps you will become enlightened only when I am gone; I am the barrier. You take me for granted. When you asked me to comply with your three conditions, I already knew that those conditions would become the barriers in your progress. You still haven't forgotten the fact that you are my brother. You continue to believe that you have special privileges over other disciples and that I had to fulfil your three conditions. Perhaps my death will help you towards your goal."

Eventually, when the Buddha passed away the enlightened disciples convened a meeting to write down everything the Master had taught them over the years. However, Ananda was not permitted to take part in the meeting because he was deemed ignorant and unenlightened. Others, though enlightened, were also disadvantaged in that none of them had been so close to the Master continuously as Ananda had been. But, they still doubted Ananda's reliability – whether he had understood the Buddha's Messages correctly or if he would make up things with his own imagination; whether he

remembered everything accurately, or if he would give his own interpretation on what the Buddha had said.

Ananda's New Joy

Ananda was asked to sit outside the conference room and make himself available just in case something needed confirmation. It was a difficult situation and the scene was really tragic. The meeting was held behind close doors. Left out in the 'cold' Ananda was in tears because he had lived with the Buddha for forty-two years and actually knew more than the other disciples. In spite of him remembering each and every moment with the Master, Ananda was not allowed to participate in the meeting because they deemed him unfit.

Something transpired as he sat outside crying. Ananda had never cried in his entire life. With those tears his ego was washed away and he became like a child.When the disciples came out of the conference room they saw Ananda still sitting outside, but he looked transformed and radiant. The old Ananda, the old egoistic person had vanished.

They saw an innocent being with tears of joy and they all could see the light surrounding him. With great joy they invited Ananda inside. They were bewildered by the fact that Ananda could not attain enlightenment for forty-two years in spite of his close proximity to the Buddha, but no sooner had the Master departed he attained that state, exactly as the Master had continuously remarked. The Buddha's departure alone brought about the death of Ananda's ego. Ananda's contribution to the recollection of His teachings was immense.

So it is not a question of one person being decisive. Each person has to be unique in his own way. Somebody dies for the Master, somebody lives for the Master, and others become enlightened only after the Master is no more on the physical plane, each a unique individual. You cannot say who is greater - perhaps no comparison should be made. All are themselves unique and inimmitable!

Just remember one thing - your love. Then wherever you are, near or far in space and time, it does not matter. And, beyond a certain level, even time does not matter. When time and space become immaterial, then you have really touched the feet of the Master. Then whatsoever transpires in you – whether to live for the Message of the Master or to die with the Master, whatever comes naturally and spontaneously to you - let it happen.

We Devotees

"What has all this got to do with us?" devotees of the *Kali Yuga Avatar*, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba may ask. Well, the story in its subtleness reveals the different kinds of disciples the Buddha had, each one with his own uniqueness.

In comparison to the millions who follow our Beloved Lord Sai, Sai Buddha for the Buddhist Sai devotees, more than two and half millenia ago the Buddha must have had less than a few hundred of disciples, nay even less. But, the story has a powerful message for all of us, the countless millions who aspire to be, or believe they are devotees of Bhagavan Baba.

In conversation with Dr. John Hislop in 1982, Bhagavan Baba said: **"... In the years to come many devotees would 'fall' on the wayside like chaff blown away by strong wind. Only those with steady faith will remain. In fact, I will add strength to the mind and intellect of those dear to me..."**

Yes! The winds of change are intense. The real Master-Disciple connection is inside and beyond the limitation and boundaries that the body may define. **What we are about to witness and experience in the Divine Mission of our Messiah, God in our midst, is the quantum leap in awareness of the Eternal Oneness with Him, the very One within each one of us, the force of Love, Light and Splendour.**

In conclusion, my prayer to Bhagavan is to ask Him to forgive us for all our erroneous thoughts and feelings that hold us back and prevent us from dissolving into His Supreme Self, the All-pervasive Consciousness. You are our only destination Lord, and You alone can guide us through. May the "Inner-Voice" that is You, be heard loud and clear each day.

DOES GOD CONTROL US OR NOT?

One of the doubts that invariably arises in the mind of the reader of the Bhagavad *Gita (The Song Celestial from Lord Krishna)* is the following: "It is said that not a blade of grass moves without His will. And yet, Krishna who claims this on the one hand also disowns any responsibility for our actions. If we are puppets in His hands, as we are supposed to be, why then should we suffer for so-called sins? Are not all our actions ordained by Him? We are advised to improve, do better etc. Is not even that entirely in His hands? What is going on?"

We first collect the *Slokas* which tend to trigger such doubts and confusion.

Actions do not taint Me, nor am I concerned with the fruits thereof.... *- (Gita 4. 14)*

The Lord determines not the doership nor the doings of men, nor does He link actions to their fruits; it is Nature alone that does all this... - (Gita 5. 14)

The Supreme Lord is not responsible for anyone's sins or, for that matter, anyone's merit. They are both the result of actions performed by beings whose knowledge is submerged in illusion. *- (Gita 5. 15)*

By Me in My Unmanifested form, this whole world is pervaded; all beings are in Me but I do not abide in them. *- (Gita 9. 14)*

And yet, those beings are not in Me! That indeed is My unique power as Lord - though Creator and the Sustainer of all beings, I remain aloof. *- (Gita 9. 5)*

..... actions do not bind Me, unattached as I am to actions, and always standing aloof. *- (Gita 9.9)*

With Me as the Presiding Witness,..... the wheel of the Universe keeps revolving. *- (Gita 9. 10)*

..... I am TIME, inflamed now and engaged in destroying the worlds... *- (Gita11.32)*

Seeming to possess the function of the senses, yet devoid is He of the senses; though unattached, He is the sustainer of all; *- (Gita 13.15)*

Without all beings and yet within; immovable and moving; *- (Gita 13. 16)*

..... the Lord dwells in the heart of every being and by His delusive mystery (Maya), whirls them all around as though mounted on a

machine.
- (Gita 18. 61)

After a quick perusal of the above, one must necessarily sympathise with the seeker who is confused. Interestingly, the resolution to the enigma posed earlier is available in the *Gita* itself. However, it might not quite satisfy the devotee because in characteristic Krishna style, it is a "Yes and no" kind of answer!

'Yes' And 'No' in Science Too.

To one with a scientific bent of mind, a "Yes and no" kind of answer might appear to be the height of imprecision and equivocation. It is appropriate therefore to begin with an example of a situation from science itself, where one has a "Yes" answer to two seemingly contradictory situations. This example is based on Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity.

In normal day-to-day experience and for that matter in non-relativistic physics in general, space and time are considered two separate, distinct and disjoint entities. This works fine, as long as objects do not move with speeds comparable to that of light. If they do, then subtle complications arise since space and time get intertwined, which Einstein's theory allows for. Let us consider one example of such a complication.

In science, an event is described in terms of two parameters - one its location, and two its time of occurrence. In more scientific language, one would say that an event is a point in space-time with a space component as well as a time component. Time separation between events is normally measured using a clock, as for example in a race, where the two events of importance are the starting of the race and the arrival by the participant at the finishing line.

The Theory of Relativity deals with the whole gamut of what happens to the description of events by two observers, one of whom is stationary while the other is moving. Let us say there are two events E(l) and E(2), and these are observed by two observers A and B, of whom A is stationary and B is moving. Both have stopwatches, very accurate and well synchronised in advance, etc.

If the speed of B is small compared to that of light, then both observers would record the same time difference between the two events E(l) and E(2) under consideration. However, if B moves with a speed close to that of light, then situations are conceivable when B regards the two events as being simultaneous, while A maintains that there is a finite time difference between them - incidentally this difference of opinion has nothing to do with the accuracy of measurement, which is assumed to be infinite. The differences in the observations are genuine and arise because the view points of the two observers are different - to use the language of physics, one is in a stationary frame of reference while the other is in a moving frame.

The question arises: "Who is right? Is it A or is it B?" Relativity says that with respect to themselves individually, both are right! Without going into the details of the argument or the underlying mathematics, one can see that one has here, in hard-core science, a situation where one is forced to say "Yes" to two seemingly contradictory observations! The point sought to be made is that each "Yes" is a valid answer in its own right, and applies to that particular point of view.

God At Various Levels

Let us get back now to spirituality. Krishna, it will be recalled, discusses God at various levels, from the Ultimate, the Unmanifest and the Formless One to the God with Form, in particular the human form, or the Personal God, as He is sometimes referred to. The various *Slokas* quoted above as well, as the so-called contradictions in them must all be understood against this background of God spanning a wide spectrum.

If God is considered at the highest level, and one must in the end, then the Supreme One may be compared to the titular head of a country - it could be a King or President in whose name the Government functions but who is not directly involved. (One important difference of course is that whereas the titular head has no powers, God has all the powers!)

In India, for example, all Governmental activities are performed for and on behalf of the President; the President himself may know nothing about the activity (which could be the purchase of an item) but the power for it is derived from the President. Things happen in Creation in the same manner.

God has all kinds of agencies and laws, and the governance of the Universe is done by these agencies strictly according to the laws ordained - God does not involve Himself with micromanagement. For example, if one throws a stone up, God in heaven does not pull the stone down. He has ordained a law of gravity and that machinery swings into action - one might say that the various agencies work "for and on behalf of God!" There is an action and there is a reaction which also is built into the framework.

In society too it is the same; if say a person commits a traffic offence, the Traffic Police go into action - the power to do so is ultimately derived from the Head of the State, but the Head may be totally unaware of the offence. (By contrast, God the Eternal Witness knows everything that is going on!)

Physical Laws and Moral Laws Too

One would readily concede that in both the examples cited, the physical and the social, there is a clear-cut evidence of a machinery that operates, i.e., there are laws which govern the entire process. But what about life, death, morality etc.? Here too there are laws, revealed to sages, saints and prophets, and recorded by them for posterity. These are the Moral Laws which govern the Universe, as Gandhi once described them. One may not

want to believe in such laws but they operate nonetheless, just as the law of gravity has been operating right from the birth of the Universe, billions of years before Newton discovered it.

And so we draw the first important conclusion, which is that the Creator has ordained not only physical laws which govern the Universe but also Moral laws which govern the Universe too.

Law of Karma

The most important of these is the Law of *Karma* which is just like Newton 's Third law: To each action, there is a *Karmic* reaction! How exactly the business of "Reflection, Reaction and Resound" as Swami often calls it works out in practice, has been discussed earlier in this chapter, here we just note that having ordained the law, the Creator stays aloof. He does not get involved in micromanagement, just as He does not pull down a stone thrown up - He does not have to; there are forces established which would take care of that. Thus, God is not directly involved, but His power does operate through suitable agencies.

Skeptics pooh-pooh such arguments, and yet, in ordinary experience, there are inexplicable forces operating that are unquestionably the manifestations of the Hidden Hand. Take, for example, dice tossing.

Everyone knows that the six numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 have equal probability of showing up when the dice is thrown. But it is also shown that there can be freak situations with say 6 appearing repeatedly and consecutively, maybe as many as even ten times. Undoubtedly, this would be extremely rare but it can happen, as computer experiments show. Nevertheless, when one takes averages, one finds that over many, many trials, all numbers have equal probability.

Now how does the dice know that since it has occasionally favoured the number 6 to recur an unreasonable number of times, it has to correct the situation? Mathematicians would argue that it is all due to the Law of Random Numbers. One can write any number of formulae and equations but the question remains 'Who instructs the dice?' It cannot know by itself. Well, no one has the answer.

Again, with respect to birth, it is well known that Nature has designed human genetics such that there is equal chance for the birth of a boy as for a girl. At the end of the Second World War, the population of males in Europe became slightly less compared to that for females, since a large number of young men were killed in battle. This imbalance was soon set right automatically with the birth of more boys than girls. Who arranged it so? The answer would be it is all the Law of Averages. But how exactly does this Law operate? Which is the agency which keeps tab of the statistics of population and sends signals when conception and birth take place? Who presses the buttons? No one knows.

In a Nutshell…

The fact is, as Krishna says, God has assigned His work to the deities which do the job for Him, just as Government officials do the job for the Head of the State, from whom they derive their executive power. In a nutshell,

(i) At the highest level, God ordains and "delegates" power and responsibility;

(ii) He has laws governing various processes, physical and subtle;

(iii) the laws are operated "for and on behalf of God" by these agencies in accordance with the procedure encoded into the laws, whether we believe or not;

(iv) from this perspective, God Himself is NOT directly involved on a minute to minute basis, though the entire framework has been designed and set up by Him - this is reiterated in *Sloka* 5. 14 - *'The Lord determines not the doership nor the doings of men, nor does He link actions to their fruits; it is Nature alone that does all this...* and *Sloka* 9.10 - *'With Me as the Presiding Witness,..... the wheel of the Universe keeps revolving.'*

(v) But He is fully aware of what is going on, being the Witness.

Do I Have a Role At All?

The question might now arise: "If everything is inexorably decided by a rigid framework of laws, then where is the question of praying to God? He does not seem to have my role to play at all, other than being a remote and unconcerned Witness?" Here, an example would help.

In many countries, the Head of the State has the power of granting pardon. For example, in India, a person sentenced to death may appeal to the President to reduce the sentence to one of life imprisonment, and the President has the full authority to do so. Similarly, irrespective of the sins one might commit, one can always pray to God for forgiveness; and God can and will shower His Grace if there is true repentance.

The Witness And a Personal God

So far, arguments have been advanced in support of *Sloka* 5. 15 - *'The Supreme Lord is not responsible for anyone's sins or, for that matter, anyone's merit. They are both the result of actions performed by beings whose knowledge is submerged in illusion',* which is one side of the story.

Let us now look at it from the other side, to be more specific, from the viewpoint of *Sloka* 18. 61 - *..... 'The Lord dwells in the heart of every being and by His delusive mystery (Maya), whirls them all around as though mounted on a machine',* according to which one is merely a puppet in the hands of the Lord. Swami says that everything in the Universe (including all beings) is a limb of the Lord. From that point of view, the Lord does control and determine all actions! In his perspective, one sees God everywhere and

does not recognise the minor deities; everything happens because God wills so; if it rains, it is not just because of the clouds brought rain but because God willed the clouds to do so, etc.

Perhaps an analogy might help at this juncture. We are aware that the weather phenomena are entirely due to the sun. Two views can be taken about what happens. One might say that the sun merely shines and does not care whether the Earth exists or not; the weather is controlled entirely by the oceans, the atmosphere etc., although the driving energy is derived from the sun.

Alternately, one might declare that the sun heats the oceans, causes the water to evaporate; it also heats the land and causes the air over it to rise producing thereby, low pressure and that this differential pressure causes the moisture derived from the oceans to be blown over the land where it condenses as rain. In the former viewpoint, the sun is merely a witness while in the latter viewpoint, the sun is directly involved.

We thus have the "Yes and no" situation, which depends largely on the perspective. For one who views God as the Abstract and the Formless, God functions merely as the witness; but for one who believes in a personal God, the view that God controls everything is not untenable.

Finally, from the point of view of one who does not see any diversity in the Universe but sees God as being everything and the only thing, *i.e.*, for one immersed in non-duality, all is God, all is determined by God and all is done by God for there is none other than God. Thus, as in the example based on Relativity, each point of view is correct in its own frame of reference.

Why Do People Suffer?

Even if one reluctantly concedes the above argument, there will still linger the doubt: "Why do people suffer for their actions, especially if God pulls the strings as in the case of puppets?" Krishna has clearly explained this; He says that if an action is done with a doership feeling, then clearly the person doing the action is the doer and not God; and naturally, the doer has to face the consequences too.

One cannot willfully plot a murder, commit it for some personal reasons, and then sigh that it is all His Will and His doing. If one thinks one is acting then God is not; if one always thinks that it is God who is acting, then it is God who is acting - it all depends on the person. In the latter case, the person does not abandon the view even if something terrible happens to him; instead, he stoically says that it is all a blessing from the Lord. Incidentally, in the grand Master Plan, God knows fully well who are the ones afflicted with the doership virus and who are the ones free from it.

And He delicately arranges for some of the former to be His instruments - for example, the greedy are made to face sometime or the other, thugs who

extort money; greed is thus suitably repaid. This way, the Divine Director provides a role for all!

THE SOURCE OF ALL PROSPERITY

God is "*Raso vai sah*", Baba has often said, which means that God is the Divine Ambrosia. He is sweet, sustaining and strength-giving. The different forms of the Divine like Rama, Krishna or Jesus are but differently designed cups through which the ambrosia that is God can be imbibed, experienced and enjoyed. And among the various forms of the Divine, the elephant-headed Lord, Ganesha, is perhaps the most bewitching, the most charming and the most celebrated. Since ancient times, Ganesha has been worshipped as the Lord of all knowledge, intelligence and wisdom in India and many other parts of the world.

The Ganesha Principle

Elaborating on the Ganesha principle on the occasion of *Ganesha Chaturthi* (the Day celebrating Lord Ganesha's advent) which fell on the 28th Aug in 1998, Baba said,

"Ganapathi (or Ganesha) is the embodiment of all potencies. He is the abode of every kind of intelligence. He represents no commonplace principle. He is the presiding deity for all auspicious functions, who can make even the inauspicious occasions auspicious. He is the river of prosperity and intelligence. With His grace, any desire can be realised. He occupies the position of one who is the source of all prosperity."

Appellations of Lord Ganesha

Fascinatingly, Lord Ganesha, the God of auspicious beginnings, has a number of appellations and each one chooses a name of his/her liking to invoke Him. He is described as -

Ganapathi - The Leader of all celestial beings,

Vighneshvara - The Lord of every form of *Aiswarya* i.e. wealth,

Vighanharta - The Annihilator of all obstacles,

Vinayaka - The Supreme Master with none above Him,

Gajanana - The God with an elephant face,

Lambodar - The God who is pot bellied,

Mooshika Vahana - The Lord with the rat as His vehicle,

Ekdanta - The God who is one tusked,

Gajadhipati - The Lord of elephants, etc.

In October, 1997, elaborating on the principle of Lord Ganesha on *Ganesh Chaturthi* Day, Swami said,

"Ganesha is Aprameya, meaning He is transcendent and all-encompassing. Hence, He can be worshipped in any manner. Your prayers will certainly reach Him if you affix the stamp of 'faith' and the address it with 'love' to Him. Infact, Ganapathi dwells in every human being in the form of intellect and wisdom. There is no need to seek for Him in the outside world. Realise and act on the basis that the living Divinity is ever-present within you."

The Significance of His Enchanting Form

The extraordinary figure of Lord Ganesha has been a source of joy to many devotees since the time man started worshipping His beautiful form.

With a big belly, beautiful tusk, baby-elephant head, penetrating eyes, four arms, handsome ears, and all these harmoniously balanced, Lord Ganesha's form is most enchanting and blissful. Baba has explained that the elephantine head signifies intelligence and leadership qualities. The elephant in the jungle is a symbol of might and magnitude and when there is no path in the jungle, it is the elephant that walks through and creates a path and shows the way. It is the same with everybody's lives, Swami says - the elephant-headed Lord Ganesha shows the ideal path for all to tread.

The elephant has great patience and forbearance. It is not only highly intelligent but is also known for its fidelity and gratitude. It is prepared to sacrifice its life, but it can never tolerate its master's suffering. Intelligence without gratitude is valueless, Swami explains.

On devotees' reservations concerning how the rat can be the vehicle for Lord Ganesha, Baba clarified that the rat which likes to move in darkness represents ignorance. Ganesha is regarded as the one who subdues ignorance and dispels darkness. He symbolizes the triumph of wisdom over ignorance and of egolessness over desires.

The Importance of the Sacred Offerings

It has been the practice in India since ancient times to offer Lord Ganesha steam-cooked delicacies like *kudumulu* and *vundrallu*, especially on *Ganesh Chaturthi* Day. Explaining their significance, Swami says,

"These steam-cooked offerings with no oil are unique and special. Til seeds, rice flour and jaggery are mixed, made into balls, boiled in steam and offered to Lord Vinayaka. You should enquire into the purpose of making such an offering. These steam-cooked offerings (modaka) are good for the eyes, they free us from all defects of the eye like spots and cataracts and are beneficial to people suffering from asthma and eosinophilia. A combination of jaggery and til seeds prevents all defects and diseases caused due to bile (vatha), wind (pitha) and phlegm (cough). The rice flour preparation helps in digestion too.

These offerings are meant to improve health and confer happiness on man. They are not to be treated as mere ritualistic practices. All that is related to God has a sacred inner meaning."

Lord Ganesha – The Primordial One

It is a time-honoured tradition to offer worship first to Ganesha before embarking on any undertaking or learning music, the fine arts or any branch of knowledge. The popular belief is that Lord Ganesha instills purity in body and fearlessness in mind and removes all the obstacles coming in the way of any endeavour. It is for this reason that the first *bhajan* is always dedicated to Ganesha in all Sai Bhajan sessions. Worship of Lord Ganesha confers success at two levels, *Pravritti* (outward) and *Nivritti* (inward), spiritual as well as worldly.

On *Ganesh Chaturthi Day*, 1997, Swami said,

"The adoration of Ganapathi is not of recent origin. Ganapathi is lauded at several places in the Rig Veda which clearly shows that Ganapathi is as ancient as the Vedas. In several places Ganapathi is mentioned both in the Vedas and the Upanishads (most ancient Indian scriptures). There are many prayers addressed to Ganapathi in the Narayanopanishad. There are prayers to him in the Thaithiriya Upanishad also. The Ganapathi Gayathri Mantra also figures in the Upanishads."

Ganapati Gayatri

Ekdantaya Vidmahe
Vakratundaya Dhimahi
Tanno Dantih Prachodayat

"I meditate on the single tusked lord, the Lord with His curved trunk. May He grant knowledge and inspire me."

"If you want to lead a life of happiness, free from troubles and difficulties, you have to pray to Ganapathi, the remover of all obstacles," Swami says.

How Should We Pray to Lord Ganesha?

Swami answered this beautifully on Aug 25, 1998, saying,

"We should not ask for petty things like jobs and other worldly matters. We should pray: 'Let there be no obstacles in our path'. We should ask for Ganesha Himself. Once you have Ganapathi on your side, you will become the master of all."

Further Swami says,

“There is no need to go to any temple. Vighneswara dwells in each one of you as your Buddhi (intelligence) and Vijnaana (wisdom). When you make proper use of your inherent intelligence and wisdom, you will be successful in life.”

Ganesh Chaturthi falls on the 7th of September this year – the sacred day to celebrate the advent of Lord Ganesha. Let’s remind ourselves of the holy ideals set by our Lord, Sai Ganesha, on this day and tread the path to His Lotus Feet as joyfully as a river merges with the ocean.

WHAT IS PROGRESS?

This is an article from one of our readers, Dr. P. Vijayaraghavan, M.D. who is working as Assistant Professor of Medicine at the Madras Medical College & Govt. General Hospital , Chennai.

Know That, knowing which, you will know everything that is to be known ***(Upanishads)***

The above saying from the *Upanishads*, represents the acme of human thought. It implies that when one becomes aware of a higher perspective, one comes to know of things encompassed by that higher perspective (the highest perspective being that of Universal Consciousness or 'God').

What is Progress?

This axiom is frequently useful in the worldly context and helps to solve difficult problems. Progress, growth and eradication of poverty are debating points in today's world. 'Progress' is a term being used by various people: the politician, economist, scientist, common citizen, industrialist, the businessman - each has his or her own interpretation. However, we frequently find that a particular idea of progress is being projected as the one representative of all the others.

Thus, we find that at the social level, material progress as evidenced by the modern development of cities is frequently regarded as a sign of progress. Consequently 'growth' is considered to be the increase in material possessions and poverty is regarded as lacking in material needs. These are superficial interpretations, which have been perpetuated and have come to be accepted, by and large.

However these assertions do not stand close scrutiny. **Progress and growth have no meaning if the human being is unable to enjoy them.** Good physical and spiritual health form the basic requirements for material possessions to have a meaning. Material progress is hollow inside, if people are lacking in inner peace. Today we find that whatever inner bliss people may be having is being constantly eroded by the materialistic socio-political environment, which is at conflict with the core requirement of inner well-being. Such a hollow progress is fragile and always at the risk of collapse. As Baba tells us,

'The individual, the society and the nation constitute an inextricably linked organism. The peace and welfare of the nation depend on the peace and progress of society, which in their turn are dependent on the peace and good conduct of individuals. Unless individuals develop mutual regard and tolerance and cultivate equal-mindedness towards each other, there can be no peace and harmony in the community. Material progress alone cannot bring about peace and harmony and happiness among people.'

(Divine Discourse on 12-5-84)

True Progress

True progress can be considered as strengthening our inner peace and contentment. If this is recognized and preserved then superficial material possessions will be added on to it as and when required. This is the law of nature. Whether this law becomes operational depends on one's preference at the individual level and the political process at the state level.

For true progress of the state or the nation, we need a political structure that is in tune with this law of nature. This is possible when the individual's heart, the abode of bliss, is made the touchstone for all political processes. It is a question of society recognizing and reposing faith in **this law of nature that will provide prosperity based on inner peace.**

Once progress is viewed from this perspective, it throws light on the present distressing global phenomenon of terrorism and suicide bombers. Those who indulge in such inhuman acts are empty of 'inner bliss' and instead they are filled with negative feelings. It would be wise to try and find why they have come to reach such a state of 'lovelessness', and try to correct the conditions that have led them to such a state. Simply trying to counter terrorism without addressing the basic cause would be shortsighted and counter-productive. **True progress would take into account the grievances of people whoever and wherever they are.**

One Arrow, Two Birds

In his book *My Baba and I*, Mr. Hislop refers to a conversation he had with Swami. Mr. Hislop asks Swami how to reconcile the fact that material needs are unavoidable in this world, though spiritual fulfillment appears to be the desirable objective of life. In His beautiful reply, Swami explains it as follows:

'Imagine a man climbing a coconut tree to the top to get the coconuts. As he climbs, in the shadow cast by the tree, the shadow of the man also climbs to reach the top. Spiritual pursuit is the real man climbing the real tree. If this is taken care of then the material aspect represented by the shadow, would take care of itself.'

Dwell on the Inner Bliss

The above explanation forms the core of this article. All we need to do is to constantly dwell on the Lord or the 'Inner Bliss' - the manifestation of God who is within each one of us. The Lord then takes care of the individual's needs, as Lord Krishna says to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Accepting this word of God implies faith in the Divine Plan and that **whatever happens, being under the purview of God, is ultimately for our own good.**

We are blessed to have realized that Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is the Lord Himself in our midst. His teachings simplify our understanding of complex problems. His instruction to '**Bend the body, Mend the senses and End the mind'** guides our *Sadhana.* When we 'end our mind' by taking refuge in Swami, it is He who will inspire our life – taking care of today's needs and even our thoughts, words and deeds. To attain this goal He prescribes *Chintana* (constant contemplation of God), *Namasmarana* (constant repetition of God's name) and exhorts us to '**Be Good, See Good and Do Good**'. This purifies our minds day by day and keeps us focused on our goal.

What is found to be true on the individual level can also be true for society as a whole. **If human society is able to stay focused on the 'Inner Bliss', or feeling of well-being, within each one of us, then society's material needs should be taken care of by the all-pervasive God.** This is possible by utilising the Conscience (which is a manifestation of God) in the structures of society such as politics, health care and education. Swami has said that we should constantly endeavour to find solutions to the problems of the society, especially of the poor and the needy and He urges us to utilize our energies towards this end.

ABC of Life - Always Be Careful.

Speak the Truth; avoid speaking truth that is unpleasant.

Follow the Master, Face the devil, Fight till the end and Finish the game.

are some of His words which have guided the author. Swami inspires us by His untiring Work, instills wisdom by His illuminating speeches, teaches us by His exemplary conduct and soothes us by His Compassion and Love. **If we put into practise even a fraction of His life, which is His message, then our lives would be redeemed and fulfilled.**

(It is the author's view that human society can stay focused on the 'inner bliss' through the mechanism of Partyless Democracy based on the individual's conscience, which is elaborated in his 'Musings on Partyless Democracy' available at http://partylessdemocracy.rediffblogs.com/)

SERIAL ARTICLES

THE DIVINE STORY OF
SHIRDI SAI PARTHI SAI - Part 9

(continued from the previous issue)

SCENE 5

Venkusa's disciples, who are jealous of Baba, are holding a conspiratorial meeting to air their frustration.

A DISCIPLE: We have been serving our Master with great devotion for so many years. Yet, our Master never talks nicely to us. But he talks with such love to this fellow and discusses so many important things with him.

ANOTHER DISCIPLE: Yes, Bhagya, what you say is true. The same thing bothers me also.

DISCIPLE: We have studied so much more than him.

ANOTHER DISCIPLE: Yes. That is why it is difficult to bear the undue praise the Master showers on him.

SCENE 6

Venkusa walks down to where the disciples are. He finds that they are not doing the work assigned to them.

GURU: *[to the group]* I asked you to clean the cow-shed but all of you are here!

DISCIPLE: Tell him!

ANOTHER DISCIPLE: Master, Baba said he would do it; that is why…..

GURU: Not only the cow-shed, but the entire *Ashram* has been cleaned by Baba, and all by himself! Only the one with such capacity can fully understand duties and the responsibilities of *Ashram* life. Resolute dedication alone brings fulfilment to a student. A disciple who does not put into practice what he learns is of no use. You may spend years and years in the *Ashram* but you will never attain the goal!

The disciples become even more unhappy, consequent to the displeasure expressed by the Guru.

SCENE 7

Ashram garden. Baba is attending to the plants, when the jealous disciples gather around Him in order to mock and tease him.

DISCIPLE: [*to Baba*] Hey you! Are you feeling cocky that you are the favourite disciple of the Master?

SAI: It is my duty to follow the Master's command.

DISCIPLE: Oh! You are proud of your implicit obedience to the Master, are you?

SAI: My Master is my God! It is the duty of a disciple to follow the Master's command.

DISCIPLE: For us too, our Master is equivalent to God. However, Master seems to think that you are much better than us. He appears to look down upon us.

SAI: It is wrong to think so. All are the same to our Master.

DISCIPLE: *[to the group]* Did you hear? He has begun to preach to us!

ANOTHER DISCIPLE: Did you not clean the cow-shed just when the Master was watching, so that you might earn his Grace?

SAI: Just as one cleans the body, one must also clean the place of residence. One does not have to be told to do it.

DISCIPLE: It is not your business to preach to us. You have become arrogant because of master's indulgence.

The angry disciples now pounce on Baba and hit Him. After this, one of them heaves a brick that injures his forehead and causes bleeding. At this stage, the Guru comes there and sees what has happened. He is shocked. A bandage is tied over the injury on Baba's forehead. Later, this became Baba's standard headdress.

GURU: *[to the disciples in general]* Take Baba inside the Ashram.

DISCIPLES: Yes Sir. …….. [*The disciples lift Baba in order to carry Him]*

DISCIPLE: *[to others carrying Baba]* Slowly.

GURU: *[to disciples in general] Ashram* life is supposed to teach you wisdom, but all of you are wallowing in ignorance. Anger, which is one of the six principal enemies of man, produces jealousy. Physical injury affects only the body and not the mind. Wisdom has not dawned in any of you. You have not hurt this young man but the God in him! Anger cannot touch the one who is immersed in God. I'm disgusted!

(To be continued)

GITA FOR CHILDREN

PART 11

Continued from the previous issue….

CHAPTER 5

35. The Wise man sees God in the microcosm as well as the macrocosm. He makes no distinction between a saint and a sinner. For him, the saint and the sinner are both God in disguise. Can you go through life like that? Impossible! That is why I recommended for you the Path of Action. Got it?'

36. 'I now come to something I had put off earlier, namely about My Incarnation. I take on a human form whenever I feel that My direct presence here on earth is absolutely essential. Further, I choose the parents of the body, the place of birth and also the exact time of birth. All these factors are entirely under My control. Thus, the time chosen is sacred, the place chosen is sacred, and the parents of the body also are holy people.'

37. 'The *Avatar* moves about like ordinary mortals. He will talk like an ordinary peerson, He will eat, sleep, and dress like an ordinary peerson. But there the similarity ends! The *Avatar* is without blemish in every respect, and personifies *Sathya* (Truth) and *Dharma* (Righteousness). Ever smiling, He radiates *Prema* (Love) all the time. Not even an iota of selfishness and self-interest can ever be found in Him. Ever compassionate and ever full of *Kshama* or forbearance, He is always giving. Thus His hand is always above, and never below receiving!'

38. 'Like humans, the Lord in human form is also ever engaged in actions. However, whereas ordinary humans get bound as the result of their actions, the Lord is not so bound.'

39. Arjuna asks, 'How is that? I don't follow.'

40. Krishna explains: 'The answer is simple. Actions bind one to the world when performed with some self-interest. As I told you, I have no self-interest, not even a trace of it. I am beyond this world and come here just to play a specific role for a limited time. All My actions are based on Pure Love, and that is the reason why actions can never bind Me.'

41. Arjuna asks, 'If I perform actions with Pure Love, will I also be free from getting bound?'

42. Krishna replies, 'Of course! And that is precisely the lesson I have come to teach you! Selfless action based on Pure Love is the bottom line. You must always give and not grab. You must give and forgive. You must give and

forget. Remember, it is in giving that you really receive. And what is that you receive? My Grace!'

43. Seeing a frown on Arjuna's face, Krishna now says, 'Mind you, I am not saying that actions performed with expectation of specific rewards are necessarily evil. A mother may want her son to do well so that she could be proud of him. This is a natural human instinct. Such a desire is not immoral or a sin. However, it is entirely worldly, and based on body-attachment. That is what binds one to the cycle of birth and death.'

44. 'Worldly desire, no matter how good it might seem, always leads to bondage. Worldly desires inevitably chain you to the cycle of birth and death. You may want many things and all these desires might not get fulfilled in this birth. So destiny offers you another birth but then, in that birth you also face much misery. And so on it goes: Birth again death again; in between, sojourns in so many wombs! What a fool man is! If only he would constantly think of the Lord!!'

45. 'So you see, the *Avatar* is not like you in terms of the purpose for which actions are performed, and that is why He remains beyond always. There is one other point that I must mention. People often lament, "O God why did you inflict this suffering on me?" But do these people think of Me in their moments of success? Hardly! Instead they give all the credit to themselves and are busy accepting congratulations. So it would seem that all I do is to spread misery! But let that pass.'

46. 'Arjuna, man alone is the master of his Destiny and not God above. God merely watches and says yes to all that man wants. If he wants to be good, God says yes. If he wants to be bad, God says, "Alright do so if that is what you want". If man wants desires to be fulfilled God says go ahead. If on the other hand man wants to be liberated, God not only says yes but helps with great enthusiasm.'

47. Arjuna asks, 'You say man alone is the master of his Destiny. But there are certain things not explained by this statement. Let us say there is a poor couple. They have a son who is badly handicapped. These people are very good and highly devoted to You. They are not doing any harm to anybody. Yet they are suffering. Why are they being punished? Don't tell me they are punishing themselves.'

48. Krishna smiles and replies, 'I am glad you asked this question because this is a common confusion that people have. You see, people accumulate positive and negative points in every birth. This account has to be settled. Often it is not settled in one lifespan and there is a carry over. In the example that you gave, both the parents and the handicapped boy are settling the account of their respective past *Karma*. Men do not realise that they are the masters of their own fate; the fault lies not in the stars but in themselves.'

49. 'The solution to all this, as I have already told you, is to totally surrender to God and let Him shape your life. But unfortunately, people think of God only

when they are in trouble and more or less forget Him when things are going smoothly. This kind of part-time devotion will simply not work! Beware!!'

50. 'In such matters, you must draw a lesson from the Wise. They too live in this very same dual world with all its pairs of opposites. But their outlook to these is very different.'

51. 'The Wise man constantly tells himself, "It is wrong to imagine that some things in this Universe are good and other things are bad. If everything is God, how can anything ever be bad? Impossible! Things only appear to be bad even though they are good in the core. It is like in a play enacted by a drama troupe. All the members are good people really, but in the play some may act as the good guys while others may play the role of bad guys. God's Cosmic Drama is no different".'

52. 'The point that I am trying to make is simply that the Wise man is above duality that most people are in the grip of. What deludes ordinary people does not delude the Wise man.'

53. 'Creation is a clever puzzle designed by God. It fools 99.9999% of the people. Sometimes it even makes them believe that the transient is Eternal and that the Eternal does not exist! Everyone sees people dying all the time and yet, most people do not realise that they too would have to go one day. If they did, would they not give serious consideration to what they must do with their lives? Do you see anyone doing that? Hardly!'

54. 'Incidentally, this is where *Karmaphala Tyagam* (Renouncing the results of actions) that I taught you earlier comes in handy. When you are truly engaged in *Karma Yoga*, the world just flits by. You are so immersed in working for God and offering everything to Him, that you couldn't care less about duality and all that stuff! You will get wet only when you go out into the rain without an umbrella. If you stay at home, how can you get wet?'

55. 'In short, while the *Sankhya Yogi* truly rises above delusion, the *Karma Yogi* bypasses it neatly by firmly attaching himself to God. I might add that God likes the *Karma Yogi* very much. Do you get the hint Arjuna?'

To be continued…

WINDOW TO SAI SEVA

SERVING WITH THE MIND

This is an excerpt from the book "The Touch of the Lord – on the Life of the O' Brien Twins" by Dorothy and Moyia O'Brien. The O'Brien twin sisters, referred to by Swami as "The Pink Twins" are from Australia and have dedicated their lives in the service of others in Brisbane through SWARA (Sunshine Welfare and Remedial Association), a home for handicapped started almost three decades ago. No wonder, they carved a niche for themselves in the Lord's heart and Swami always found time to talk personally to His 'Pink Twins' whenever they visited Him.

"Why should you fear anything when you have such a Lord of the universe to take care of you. I do everything for your good." - Baba

Sai Baba once said, **"I have come to repaint the signposts on the highway to God."** The word 'repaint' suggests that He is not telling us anything new - He is just making it easier for us to understand and live according to the wisdom that has been given already by the great spiritual teachers of earlier times. His personal example, His love and His teachings all play a vital part in guiding us in our personal lives. We would like to share with you a few examples of our understanding of what His teachings mean for us, starting with the healing power of love.

A Sweet Story

This is a particularly sweet story: There were two women, one with a new baby, who came up to us one day at Brindavan - they felt that Sai Baba had guided them to speak with us. We did not have time to see them in our room so they came to our rickshaw after *Darshan*. Many problems had suddenly come into their lives, and they asked us to pray for them. There was a lot of fear, particularly for the baby, and Sai Baba had told them to stay and not move on.

We tried to help by saying that it was important to get rid of their fear, because **if one has fear, then one is drawing negative energy to oneself**. To counteract this, we suggested that they say, *"We are loving; we love Baba. Baba wants us here. He blessed our baby. We know we are doing the right thing by staying here. We are building this great force-field of loving energy around us; so that if people try to give negative energy to us and we don't absorb it, it just reflects back to the people who sent the thoughts, and they have to reabsorb it."*

We advised them not to say to Baba how bad everything is; but have faith and tell Him that they trust Him and have faith in Him and to pray, *"We know that You are with us. We know that You give us Your help. We know that You are*

total goodness, so all that You can give us is goodness. We know that You want us to stay here, and we have no doubt that You will make life flow sweetly for us and protect the baby."

We were hoping that this would have helped them - it was just a few quick words, as we were getting ready to leave. However, one of the girls began to cry quite hysterically and said, *"You don't understand."* We were still trying to talk to her when we had to move - Sai Baba's car was coming and we were in the rickshaw inside the grounds of the College.

We drove outside and parked, but in our minds we could still see her poor little tearful face as we had driven away. So we said to the driver, *"Go back and find them. We have to get them happy before we leave them."*

"Warm Love, Love"

When we have a problem, or when we are trying to think of an answer for someone, we touch our ring from Sai Baba and ask Him, *"Help us to say the right thing,"* and then we just put love on people. We believe, no matter how angry or distressed somebody might be, if we pour love on them, a gradual change will come. So we were pouring love on her, repeating, *"Warm love, love."*

The driver found her, and when she came back to us she was smiling and was quite settled down. We were surprised, but then realised that by telling her in our heart, *"Love. Love. Love,"* it was much stronger than words.

It is our belief that **consciously sending love to people can have a wonderful healing effect upon them**. We send love to many, many people every day, particularly when we are in India waiting for Baba - to our family, to many special friends, and to all the people at **SWARA** (Sunshine Welfare and Remedial Association). We always start with the sick ones - they get first priority. It is very important for us to see their face and, as we are good at visualisation, we can usually see people quite clearly. We talk to them, tell them we love them and send them Sai Baba's love and healing, as maybe our love alone is not powerful enough to heal them. They usually feel better after that, smiling and feel a loving connection with us.

A very dear friend of ours is in hospital after having a heart attack and a stroke. **We send her love every day, and people say, "She seems to be getting stronger, and she talks about you. She knows you love her and she's grateful for it."** It is obviously helping her.

We have a cousin who has a brain tumour - we try to send love and healing to her every day and she seems to be getting better. We hope we are helping her. Even if we cannot heal people, we can try to give them love and peace.

The Toogoolawa School in Ormeau, Queensland, is a school for problem teenagers and we send them love, using a photo of them sitting on a verandah eating ice-cream. We have such a sweet feeling for them and long to make their lives better and successful. When someone is upset, our loving input seems to work.

We like to put protection around people who are travelling. We think of Baba outside the car, plane or train in His beautiful robe shimmering with rays of light, covering the vehicle and the people so they are all wrapped up in His loving care and protection. We also do this for ourselves when we are travelling and always feel safe. If the plane begins to vibrate in bad weather, we imagine His beautiful hands steadying it and we visualise a golden protective glow around the pilot and the other people flying with us.

If we cannot open our hearts enough to love someone who has done something cruel or hurtful to people, then we try to feel compassion for them. We remind ourselves that if they have done the wrong thing, they will have to pay for it through *karma* either in this life or the next. Thinking in this way allows us to feel sorry for them because they are not fortunate enough to know they will have to make recompense, and maybe later our compassion develops into love.

Service with the Mind

We know that everyone, no matter how unattractive they appear on the outside, has a core of love within them that has been overshadowed by the circumstances of this or previous lives. It is our belief that, by putting light and unconditional love around them, we can help to dissolve all that anger, bitterness or cruelty.

We are confident that we have some success, because Baba said to us that we do **"Service with the mind",** and on occasions we have actually seen changes for the better in people. Sometimes a person might hurt our feet by walking on them at *Darshan* and instead of feeling annoyed or resentful, we pour love on them and they smile and say, *"Oh, we really are sorry."*

We said to Baba once,

"We don't understand why You are so loving to us, why You are so good to us, why You are so sweet to us, why You lavish so much love and attention on us."

Moyia said to Him, *"We must have done something in another life, because we could never have done anything in this life that was good enough to deserve this."*

He just looked at us for a while and then said, **"You two serve with the mind."**

He did not say *"You make books for me"* or *"You run the place for disabled people."* Apparently, the best thing about us is that we serve with the mind. Well, *"Serving with the mind"* is putting love on people; that is what we do all the time...

The greatest urge in our lives is to make life sweeter for people, to help people, and make life better for them. This is a really sincere thought we have always had.

- Dorothy and Moyia O' Brien

SEVA IN ST. LOUIS, USA

The doctors among you can serve the poor by treating them without insisting on payment; give the poor all the attention and care that you lavish on the rich, paying patients .
– Divine Discourse, 20th Dec 1967

The Mid-Central region of the Sathya Sai Baba Organization of America conducted a **Free Medical Camp** at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church, St-Louis, Missouri on June 11, 2005. This was the second medical camp in the St. Louis area by the Sathya Sai Baba Organization.

A total of 238 people, including 47 children, benefited from this camp. Dr R. Varadachari was the medical director of the camp and Dr. Chandra Varadachari was the medical camp service coordinator of the camp. They were supported by nine other core team members.

Apart from the service that was rendered, one thing that the H2H Team feels needs to be mentioned was the meticulous planning that went into the camp, as evidenced from the plentiful array of graphs, result tables, instructions for trained and untrained volunteers and interpreters, room plans, duty assignments, original health questionnaires and consent to treatment forms.

No wonder, the camp was a great success. We have picked just two sample room plans from the many in the report, just to give you an idea.

No doubt, such a camp must have necessitated months of planning and we can only wish that such endeavours are emulated all over the world. Here are some excerpts from their report.

ST. LOUIS MEDICAL CAMP REPORT

"The main goals of our Medical Camp are to provide Health Screening and Health Education to the poor underprivileged Latino community in whom heart disease, hypertension and diabetes are highly prevalent. Latino women are also at high risk for uterine cervical cancer.

This year the health care team composed of 161 volunteers including 25 doctors and 11 nurses, interpreters and other volunteers. The pastor of the Church Rev. Father Jack Schuler provided the entire school class rooms for the Medical Camp activities.

Focus on Women's Health

Women's health was one of the main focuses in this year's camp. For the first time in our Medical Camp, mammography and Pap tests were done on site in vans brought from Barns Jewish hospital. Thirty-six women underwent mammograms and thirteen women had Pap tests .

Since women are also at risk for osteoporosis, an ultrasound scanner for ankles was brought in to screen for osteoporosis. Eight women at risk for osteopenia and osteoporosis were identified and referrals were made to clinics for further confirmation.

Ideal Body Weight

One of the other emphases of this camp was ideal body weight to reduce heart disease, hypertension and diabetes. Body Mass Index which reflects central obesity was done on 153 people. People who were overweight were advised on diet and exercise. Other services provided included **blood pressure check, blood cholesterol** and **blood sugar check, lead screen, asthma screen, pediatric assessment, vision test, hearing test, dental check** and **skin care assessment.**

Here is the Medical Camp Results Table:

SATHYA SAI BABA ORGANIZATION OF AMERICA
MID-CENTRAL REGION 4 MEDICAL CAMP
06-11-2005

A.Attendees

GENERAL	TOTAL #
Total attendees	238
Adults	191
Children	47
Adult males	77
Adult females	114

B. HEAD COUNT by Booths & Test results

BOOTHS	TOTAL#	Results-Abnormal
Height/Weight/BMI	153	Overweight- 50
Blood Pressure	170	Hypertension-25
Asthma screen	34	5 <80% 1 <75%
Eye	82	Refraction, Watering, pterygium, Pinguecula
Skin care	40	Acne, dry skin, solar lentigo
Nutrition Education	80	NA
Diabetes -Education	35	NA
Hearing Test	92	Defective hearing-38
Lead screen	6	Sent to State Lab
Children's Health	47	Fluid in middle ear-2, overweight few, ? strabismus
Dental Health/ Hygiene	158	Gingivitis-70; caries 50; orthodontal care needed 10
Blood Cholesterol/ HDL/Ratio	171	+ 53 / t62/+65
Blood Sugar	170	+ 22 (> 300mg -3 cases)
Bone scan	70	Osteopenia-6; osteoporosis -3
Helmets for bicycle safety (children)	40	
Free Mammogram	36	4 under 40 had breast exam by HCP; 2 with H/O breast cancer were referred for diagnostic mammogram
Free Pap Test	13	9 under 35 were referred to La Clinica.
Exit Consult	90	System review, referrals to clinics made
Car Seat Check	10	6 car seats replaced free of charge.

C. Volunteers(Participants) Total #161

Category	#	Organization representation
Doctors (MD)	25	
Pediatricians-	2	
Ophthalmologists	2	St. Louis Eye Center
Cardiologists	2	
Internist/Gastroenterologist	1	

Those Who Served

Under the banner of the Sathya Sai Baba Organization of America, representatives and staff from BJC Hospital, Christian Hospital, La Clinica, St Louis Public Health Department, Cardinal Glennon Hospital, American

Diabetic Association, and the American Red Cross gave their services free of cost.

Health education was provided on **First Aid, poison control, nutrition, diabetes** and other areas of health concern. **40 bicycle helmets** were provided to children. Infant car seat checks were also provided by St. Louis Safe Kids Program. A list of resources in the area, including all free and sliding Scale Clinics were given to the attendees.

Distinguished guests included St. Louis County Executive Charlie Dooley and St. Louis Health Commissioner Ms. Melba Moore. Mr. Dooley paid glowing tribute to the Sathya Sai Baba Organization and other volunteers for their services. He observed that **'There is great need for this type of free service in the community.' Ms. Moore invited the Sathya Sai Baba Organization and the team of dedicated volunteers to come to St Louis city to provide this service for which she said the city has a great need**."

EXCERPT FROM GUIDELINES

As mentioned above, there was no aspect of the camp that was not covered during the planning process. There were guidelines made for attendees, doctors, volunteers... any group associated with the camp. Here we have a few excerpts of their guidelines, some ideas of which we think will be useful to anybody planning such a programme.

GUIDELINES FOR ATTENDEES

• All test results are entered manually in the H& P forms which the attendees take to every booth.

• The attendees get the original page (top page) of the H & P forms and the back copy is given to the transcriptions hi the Exit Consult room to enter the results in the computer.

• Infant car seat safety checks are done in the rear parking lot adjoining mammogram van. [Safety Kids St.Louis has tents in the area]

• All attendees visit doctors' consultation booth [Room (Grade) 8] for an exit conference/ advice, before leaving the premises.

• Even though no new attendees are registered after 4pm , we are obliged to render the service to all those admitted prior to 4pm . So be prepared to stay until all are seen. Everything is expected to be completed by 4.30pm .

• Father Jack Schuler (Pastor) of the Church, Dr. Jack Feely (Regional President), Dr.R.Varadachari (Medical Director) and one patient (Chosen at random) will be asked for comments on Video T.V.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

• Faculty & Translators should always conduct themselves in a loving and courteous manner.

• Dress should be modest. White lab coat for doctors, White Top for other Faculty & Translators. Badges are provided at the sign in desk next to the registration at the entrance.

• Be prompt for the orientation - report to the Church at **8.15 AM on June 11.** Those with afternoon shift report at 12 noon .

• Please stay in your designated booth, for the specified time whether attendees come or not. Please inform Dr.Chandra Varadachari or one of the other coordinators, in case you have to leave the premises for an urgent cause.

• Take turns for Snacks and Lunch Break, which are provided for all faculty and translators and volunteers in the Upper Level Staff Lounge. The afternoon shift will pick up their badges at 12 noon and then go to upper level for lunch, before going to your designated areas (12-1 overlap is provided so that everyone gets their lunch).

• Interpreters should be prepared for any last minute reassignment made at the discretion of the team coordinators.

• Please return the badges at the registration desk at the conclusion of your service at the Health Fair

• Study the floor plan and be familiar with the designated areas of service.

SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR FACULTY

• Explain in simple language what you are doing and why.

Educate them on the Diseases for which you are providing the screening test. Posters and pamphlets are provided at your desk for help.

• Convey the importance of preventive Health Screening, good diet and exercise in providing better quality of life, cost saving & increase in productivity in the long run.

"Service to Man is Service to God!"

PRASHANTI DIARY

Chronicles of Heaven on Earth

Education to Educare:
Conference of Eminent Educationists

Reconnect - MBA Alumni Meet

JULY 31st, 2005: POST GRADUATE STUDENTS' DRAMA - SEVANJALI

On Sunday evening, the 31st of July, 2005, the students of the 1st year Post graduate classes of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, comprising of the MBA, MBA (Finance), M.Sc. and M.Tech. classes presented a programme on the theme of *Seva* entitled 'Sevanjali'. The well thought of and beautifully conceived drama, combining an eclectic mix of dance, songs, and the sharing of stories sought to bring to life the inner significance of the ideal of *Seva* and also how it has to be rendered, based on the teachings of Bhagavan. The boys used the medium of two well known stories - the story of Abou Ben Adhem and an incident from the life of Shirdi Sai Baba - to bring home their message to the crowd.

Abou Ben Adhem's story is a paean of service. He has been dedicating his life to the selfless service to the downtrodden and those in deep pain and suffering. One day, Abou comes across an angel who is writing the names of those who love the Lord. Abou is astonished to find that his name is not on the list. But later on, in a replay of a similar incident, Abou finds the same angel writing his name on the very top of the list of those whom God loves. This brings home the message that God loves those the best who selflessly serve others as a service to Him.

The Shirdi story depicted the incident wherein a rich but miserly merchant impatiently requests *Brahmajnana*, the divine knowledge, from Shirdi Baba. On one pretext or the other Baba keeps the merchant waiting while He tries to raise the sum of five rupees. The merchant sits through all these efforts impatiently, but is not willing to part with the Rs 5 though he has a handsome sum in his pocket, while clamouring for the Lord to bless him with priceless knowledge. Baba then chides him that it is only through sacrifice that one can attain immortality. How can one who cannot part with five rupees control the five *indriyas* (senses) and the five *bhootas* (elements)? Nature is the best example of selfless service. The river flows for the sake of others. The body too is verily for the sake of serving others.

The drama concluded with the song *'Deen Dukhiyon Se Prem Karo mera Sai Prasanna Hoga*'. Bhagavan was very pleased with the presentation and spoke with a few participants after the presentation concluded.

AUGUST 1: A MUSIC PROGRAMME BY BALA VIKAS CHILDREN FROM USA

An orchestra choir of about 37 children (12 boys and 25 girls) and a sprinkling of 7-8 adults presented an enchanting evening of music in the divine presence. They were part of a group of 85 devotees who had come to bask in the divine presence from the North-East region of the United States (Region 1).

The orchestra of these bright eager kids, led by Ms Bitsy Noel (for whom Swami made a necklace at the end of the programme), had been practising for the past one year and praying to Swami with love and devotion for permission to perform at the Divine Lotus Feet.

They had initially planned to present a bouquet of 14 songs to Swami, but Swami at the beginning asked the leader to sing only 13 songs. Ms Noel did not comprehend, so at the end of the 12th song, Swami stopped her and asked her to sing only one more song. 'Coincidentally', even the ring that Swami created for the pianist - Mr. Bob Becker, had 13 diamonds and also the original CD that Dr Wadhwani had presented to Swami in March 2005 (when he came to request the divine permission to perform at the Lotus Feet in August) contained only 13 songs.

Being intrigued by the story, I was very curious to see what the song was that had attracted such divine attention. The song which was dropped, was entitled "*Namaste*", spoke of the oneness of the God in all and was selected by the group to serve as a good-bye song to the Lord. Just goes to show that as far as the Lord is concerned there are no good-byes for He is always with us - guarding us, protecting us, wherever we are.

The 13 songs that they sang included "There is Only One Caste", "Alleluia", "Surrender To Sai", "Start The Day", "Love Eternally", "Chant The Name" and a few others. They ended the programme with a fine rendition of "When Dark Clouds Fill Your Skies Say His Name, See His Form, Hold On" that had the audience in tears.

AUG 2nd: A MUSIC PROGRAMME BY A GROUP FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM

400 UK devotees from areas such as Lancashire, Leicestershire, Wales, London and many other parts of the United Kingdom, came on 10-day *Yatra* (pilgrimage) to Puttaparthi from the 25th of July to the 4th of August by a chartered Boeing 747.

The choir group (of 30 boys and 25 girls) were dressed in their beautiful performance clothes: the sisters were in blue, pink and light yellow saris (to match the *mandir* colours) and the brothers were in white.

Swami blessed Sri Ajit Popat, the group leader to speak first, for as He endearingly put it - He had 'not heard him for a long time'. Sri Ajit Popat, in his

address, highlighted how Swami brought together the children and youth, from various places of UK, for intense practice (as their *Sadhana* in their journey to God) and they wanted to offer it to Him, just to please Bhagavan and for nothing else!

The programme began with the *Veda* chanting of the Ganesh *Prarthana* and the *Narayana Upanishad*. This was followed by 3 solo short songs and a medley of instrumental music on the accordion by a blind girl, Ms Charlotte. The compassionate Lord noticed her condition and to give her comfort, Swami signalled for her to sit down for the performance.

Then the group songs began. The hall was soon reverberating with the energising choir *bhajans* and cultural songs sung to a background accompaniment from the flute, the *tabla*, the *dholak*, electric drums, the *mridangam*, *tambura*, cymbals, the violin and the *veena* and of course, the essential harmonium.

The repertoire of group songs included "*Brahmanandam*", "*Jai Jai Jai Gananayaka*", "*Chanda Kirana*", "*HariBhajana Bina*", "*Amba Shankari*" and "*Lokah Samasthah*". There were also 2 solo songs - "*Aisi lagi Lagan*" by Vernu Navrathnam, and "*Kurai Onrum Illai*" by Laksha Satchinandam. Swami enjoyed the music and kept *talam* (rhythm) by tapping His hands on His thighs.

Aarti was performed by the music coordinators - brother Yoga and sister Hamsa, who had been instrumental in teaching the children and the youth the musical offering.

AUG 3rd: A QAWALI PROGRAMME BY THE U.K. GROUP

The UK group, in the evening prior to their departure, presented a programme entitled "*Qawali Ki Shyam Sai Ke Naam*" in Sai Kulwant Hall. The *Qawali* boys who were appropriately dressed in white pyjama-*kurta* and a green vest and cap lent colour and set the proper ambience for the musical fare to follow.

The programme began with a short *Vedam* chant. After this, a sister from the group recited the *Azaan*, and then continued with the *Al-Fatiah*. The *Qawali* programme then began with thunderous singing and *Qawali* clapping from the boys. The boys then sang 5 rousing *Qawali* songs - "*Sai Ke Darbar Mein*", "*Yeh Chandi Ki Deewar…*", "*Sai Ke Pyaar Ki…*", "*Tere Dar Pe Jo Bhi Aayaa…*", and finally "*Tere Bina Suni Lage Zindagi*". The group had also thoughtfully distributed the words to the songs so the audience could follow and sing along.

At the end of these songs, Swami blessed the group further by asking them to continue and sing *bhajans*. After another half an hour of *bhajans*, *arathi* was taken to bring to an end the day's programme.

AUG 5: STUDENT SPEECHES ON THE FIVE HUMAN VALUES

On August 5, unexpectedly, the afternoon devotee crowd was treated to a delightful fare in the guise of student speeches on the five human values.

Dr. Deepak Anand, a student who has just completed his Ph.D. in Management, spoke first on the virtues of *Sathya* and *Dharma* - Truth and Right Conduct. Quoting extensively from the *Gita*, and from Swami's teachings on these two human values, Sri Deepak Anand said that the first and the last word of the *Gita* when juxtaposed together formed the word *mama dharma* or 'my code of right conduct' and acted as a primer for humanity.

Sri Sai Giridhar, a second year M.Sc. student in Chemistry, spoke next on the virtues of *Shanti* and *Ahimsa* - peace and non-violence. He explained that *Ahimsa* can be realized only when you realize the suffering of others as your own. He stressed that the words - "I want peace" can be experienced only when the 'I' (ego) and the 'want' (desire) are dropped to leave behind peace. He also spoke on *Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavantu* - 'May all the beings in all the worlds be happy.'

Sri Vishnu Bhan spoke last on the virtue of Love - *Prema*. He started off saying that love can only be experienced. Like a mango it has to be eaten and enjoyed to know how it really tastes. He also related the story of the emperor Akbar and his minister Birbal, wherein Akbar had asked Birbal why *Avatars* themselves descended on earth, instead of sending a messenger. Deferring to answer the question later, Birbal threw a decoy mannikin similar to Akbar's son in the water when Akbar was once out boating. To save his 'son', the emperor immediately dived into the water, even though he could have easily deputed one of his servants to save his son. Similarly, said Sri Vishnu Bhan, Baba's love has forced Him to jump into the ocean of *samsara* to save us. He also said that the best examples of Baba's love are His service projects.

AUG 12: CELEBRATION OF VARALAKSHMI PUJA IN SAI KULWANT HALL - THE MORNING PROGRAMME OF PUJA AND WORSHIP

In August 2000, speaking about the *Varalakshmi Puja* (Prayer) in Sai Kulwant Hall, Swami said,

"Since ancient times, the women of Bharat have upheld the dignity and honour of the family and the community at large. The worship of goddess Varalakshmi earned them her grace and they could accomplish all this. Varalakshmi is one who grants all the boons that women pray for. She confers on women all the eight types of wealth. Worship of Varalakshmi confers wealth, prosperity and bliss. But due to the effect of modern age, people do not adhere to such sacred practices. That is why their houses lack purity and sacredness.

Legend has it that Parvati once asked Easwara if there was any way to ensure auspiciousness, prosperity and well-being of the women. She desired that every woman should lead a long, happy and healthy life with her husband, children, grandchildren, friends and relatives.

Easwara was pleased with Parvati's prayer and told her about the *Varalakshmi Vrata*, which would confer all a woman may ask for. This particular *Vrata* is a boon for all women.

Easwara revealed the sacred *Varalakshmi Vrata* to Parvati, so that the future generations might perform this *Vrata* and derive the benefits therefrom. The *Purohit* (chief priest) has enumerated the benefits which this *Vrata* confers. When a woman performs the *Varalakshmi Vrata*, she gets the blessings that she may live long with plenty and prosperity as a *sumangali* (a woman whose husband is alive) with her children and grandchildren. Varalakshmi protects seven past generations and seven future generations. Noble women like Savitri and Anasuya enjoyed peace and prosperity by performing this sacred *Vrata*. The purpose of *Varalakshmi Vrata* is to atone your sins, develop sacredness and ultimately lead you to Divinity."

Five years later, on August 12, 2005, another grand *Varalakshmi Puja* was performed in the divine presence in which 948 (nine hundred and forty-eight) married women participated. They were of all ages, from all walks of life, drawn mostly from the different districts of Andhra Pradesh and the ashram residents. There were also a few from diverse parts of the country, even from places as far off as Mumbai and Kolkata and some were even from abroad. But all had one single purpose in mind - to perform the sacred *Varalakshmi Vrata* with full feeling and devotion for the well-being of their husbands and families.

The whole of Sai Kulwant Hall was beautifully decorated for this auspicious and holy occasion. The centrepiece of the action was the beautiful dais in Sai Kulwant Hall wherein floral decorations adorned the façade of Sai Kulwant Hall. Portraits of Goddess Lakshmi done with different hued flower petals hung one each on both ends of the dais. In the centre of the stage was placed a Lakshmi carved out of black stone by specially trained sculptors in Mahabalipuram in Tamilnadu. The statue was specially commissioned for the occasion and made in strict accordance to *Vedic* injunctions.

All the women were seated in rows in front of the dais with a plate in front with all the necessary ingredients for the *Puja*. The ladies were all dressed alike in a gold-hued sari and the entire hall had a festive and august ambience that provided the right setting for the conduct of this sacred ritual.

After Swami arrived at the Hall to the sounds of *Veda* chanting and had taken His seat on the dais, He blessed the priest to start the proceedings. The priest began with a brief introductory talk in Telugu conveying gratitude to Swami at the chance for doing this *Puja*. He then led all the women in the conduct of this ritualistic worship that lasted for approximately 45 minutes. At the

conclusion of the ritual the priest also related the story of the origin of this *Puja* for the benefit of the participants.

After this, Swami personally went around the entire hall and blessed all the excited participants with the grace of His close *Darshan*. He went around the whole hall for a full ten minutes, blessing everyone, even those seated at the far end of the Hall. He then blessed the priests and their wives with clothes, after which the *arati* brought the morning's programme to a close.

THE AFTERNOON PROGRAMME OF A CARNATIC VOCAL CONCERT BY MS. NITYASHREE MAHADEVAN

In the afternoon, we were regaled with devotionals by Smt. Nithyashree Mahadevan, the eminent vocalist and one of the most popular Carnatic vocalists today. She is the granddaughter of D.K. Pattammal and Palaghat Mani Iyer, who were both singing phenomena - *Sangita Kalanidhis*. Nityashree is a disciple of Smt Lalitha Sivakumar, herself a talented artiste and the teacher of many eminent musicians.

She was accompanied by Sri Parur M.A. Krishnaswamy on the violin, Sri Umayalpuram V. Kalyanaraman on the *mridangam*, and Sri S. Srisailam on the *ghatam*. They provided
able and understated accompaniment that suitably complemented Smt Nityashree's full throated style of singing that she was able to hold for her entire concert. She ended the concert with her rendition of the Meera *bhajan*, "*Payo ji maine, Ram rathan dhan payo*." Swami gifted her a medallion and talked with her for a few minutes after the concert.

AUG 14: A DRAMA BY THE SRI SATHYA SAI HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS - BLOSSOMS OF LOVE

The High School students presented a cultural programme in the Divine Presence to highlight a basic moral teaching that is necessary for the uplift of society:

Mathro Devo Bhava, Pitro Devo Bhavah;
Acharya Devo Bahvah, Atithi Devo Bhavah

Respect your mother, father, teacher and
the guest as the very embodiment of God.

The theme unfolds through Akash, a misguided youngster, who has no time for his parents or teachers. His friend (a Sai student) decides to transform him by unfolding for him the saga of *Bharatiya* (Indian) culture and its heroes.

The first story is that of Pundarika, who continues to serve his father even though the Lord Himself is waiting at the doorstep, thus pleasing the Lord for his exemplary devotion towards his father.

Continuing in this vein, the next story is that of Aruni who saves his master's field from flooding by plugging the breach in the embankment (due to torrential rains) with his bare body, enduring the biting chilliness of the water with his bare body for his *guru's* sake.

The final story is that of a poor cobbler whom God promises to visit the next day. On the way to work however, the cobbler gives away his breakfast to a hungry sweeper and also the coat he owns to a sick old man. When he is finally ready to eat his only meal of the day, a hungry woman begs for alms and he gives her all the little food that he has and goes hungry himself. Lord Jesus is pleased over his selfless service and blesses him.

As a fitting tribute to Swami, who is the genesis of all social transformation in this *Kali* age, the grand finale highlights the multi dimensional projects of our Lord Sai - free education, free medication, free water and the *Grama Seva*.

In the last scene all the students pray to Bhagavan, "Sai, we need You; we love You; You are our life and goal; without You we are nothing." When a couple of boys went forward to seek His blessings, He said, **"It was very nice. Very happy".** Sweet words that brightened all their faces and more than compensated for their toil, hard work and sleepless nights!

AUG 15th: INDEPENDENCE DAY DRAMA BY THE 2ND YEAR POST GRADUATE STUDENTS ENTITLED *SWAARAJYA*

This Independence Day drama was centered on Bhagavan's concept of moving towards SWAARAJYA from SWARAJ. The drama began with a dance along with a song on India and the entry of the personification of the Spirit of India. The period is the pre-independence era. The Spirit of India laments about the British rule that has enslaved India and he ends with a question: "Will there be no awakening in this land?"

Moving on to the Revolt of 1857, the drama movingly portrays the sacrifice of Alluri Sitaram Kesari, the conviction of Mahatma Gandhi to the use of non-violence, Netaji Subash Chandra Bose's call to the nation and Jatin Das' fast unto death. The common man's contribution was also portrayed including that of a blind boy who despite his limitation yearned to fight for the freedom of his motherland.

The first half of the drama which was portrayed as a documentary that a journalist has made concludes with the celebrations on Independence Day on Aug 15, 1947. The journalist's boss feels that the documentary would be incomplete without portraying the present.

The residents of a house in a village, from which the journalist wants to start his story, offer him food despite not having anything to eat for themselves. Thus the journalist comes face to face with the most grotesque form of slavery - poverty.

The journalist then begins to question the Spirit of India about the relevance of Independence when the motherland is still under the shackles of poverty, corruption etc. The spirit replies that the root cause of such evils is *kama , krodha, lobha, moha, mada, and matsalya* (lust, anger, greed, attachment, ego, and jealousy). The only way to break these shackles is to make each of our lives a prayer at the Feet of the Lord, a prayer to free our hearts from lowly desires and aspire for the truth and freedom of the soul.

When every child of India aspires for the freedom of the soul, then India herself will attain her full destiny, she will realize her dream - a dream to move from SWARAJ - self-rule to SWAARAJYA - the rule of the Self.

AUG 17 & 18: AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE - "EDUCATION FOR THE 21st CENTURY- EDUCATION TO EDUCARE"

Aug 17 Events - The Conference Inauguration in the Morning and a Drama Staged In the Afternoon

The morning of August 17th saw a gathering of eminent educationists in Sai Kulwant Hall for a conference to discuss the future requirements and roadmap for education in the 21st century - evolving from education to educare. The conference was organised by the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning and the students from all the 3 campuses had come to Prashanti Nilayam for these 2 days.

The inauguration of the conference commenced in the morning of the 17th with Sri Anil V. Gokak, Vice-Chancellor, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, welcoming the delegates and Hon. Justice M.N.Venkatachaliah, the Chief Guest of the conference. In his opening address, Sri Gokak set the tone for the conference. Stating that the educational needs for the 21st century concern responding to the challenges of globalisation and playing a proactive role with a clear vision of the society we would like to live in.

Speaking next, Justice Venkatachaliah (a well renowned figure in Indian judicial circles, having held several key positions including the Chief Justice of India, Chairman of the National Human Rights Commission, and Chairman of the Constitution Review Committee), called the 20th century the bloodiest one in human history. Outlining the problems facing society, the learned justice said that overcoming the dehumanising effects of technology and ushering in a new human civilization based on compassion and human values is a need that only educare can satisfy. Terming Prashanti Nilayam as an appropriate venue for a conference on educare, he said that it is here that the greatest experiment in love, service and compassion is underway.

Swami, in His divine discourse, said that we should enquire into the true purpose of education. One may study a number of books and master various branches of knowledge, but does one enjoy peace and tranquility? All the knowledge that we acquire from books can only take care of our physical needs. People think that education confers on them respect and esteem. But, people lack true wisdom in spite of their high academic achievements.

In modern times parents want their children to pursue solely job-oriented education. But, what is the use of such education which does not bring about transformation among children?

Love is the essence of education. Bereft of love, education is artificial. Therefore, develop love in the first instance. Understand that the indweller is the same though bodies are different. Hold on to this fundamental principle and experience *Ananda* (bliss), concluded Swami.

After Swami's discourse, the conference attendees dispersed to the Administration Block of the Institute to carry on their deliberations.

In the afternoon, everyone re-assembled in Sai Kulwant Hall, whereupon two students presented the summaries of the deliberations of the morning session for the benefit of all.

Following a reading of the summaries, there was a drama by the first year post-graduate students of the Institute, entitled 'There Is Only One Caste, the Caste of Humanity. There Is Only One Religion, the Religion of Love'. Tackling a nebulous theme very creatively, the drama briefly depicted the origin, teachings and beliefs of the major religions of the world and how each one of them was designed by God for the uplift of mankind, dictated by the specific time, culture and location. Explaining in turn the essence of the 5 major religions of the world as depicted in the *Sarva Dharma* symbol, they brought out that though they may vary in their external rituals and observances, the underlying teachings are catholic in nature. This concept was highlighted very lucidly in a scene where four salesmen are promoting the same product – coloured candles. Although all the candles give the same light, each one was packaged differently and each salesman proclaimed his product to be the best and promoted his product in his unique way.

AUG 18 EVENTS: The Valedictory Function Of The Conference

The next day, after the morning *Darshan* the participants again adjourned to the Institute Administrative Block to continue their deliberations.

In the afternoon, everyone assembled in the Sai Kulwant Hall to attend the Valedictory ceremony of the conference. Sri Sanjay Sahni, Principal of the Brindavan campus, welcomed the Chief Guest for the function, Mrs. Kumud Bansal, Secretary, Primary & Secondary Education, Government of India. He also introduced the speakers for the valedictory session of the conference that afternoon.

The first two speakers were students from the Postgraduate classes, who read out the summaries of the day's proceedings of the conference.

Following the summaries, there were speeches by 2 students - Sri Sanjay Mahalingam, a Research Scholar from the School of Management, and Sri Jagadish Chandra, who is currently pursuing his M.Phil (Physics) in Bio-Optics. Both the students focused on how the Institute instilled character and

human values in the students, without sacrificing any secular education. They provided numerous anecdotes and stories to illustrate not only how the Institute students became successful in their worldly life, but also by their noble conduct and integrity earned a good name for the Institute. Sri Sanjay Mahalingam forcefully noted that Swami's boys are hence not just capable of *bhajans* and *bhojan*, but are capable of extraordinary achievements. Sri Jagadishchandra said that it is the greatest fortune of students to acquire Bhagavan as their Master, for He with His selfless Love constantly moulds the students to become better human beings and ultimately grants them the priceless gift of the Vision of the Self.

Sri S.V.Giri, former Vice-Chancellor of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, spoke on the uniqueness of the education system established by Bhagavan, which has been named by Him as 'Educare'. He said that the university orients the students towards social welfare and that education should never be removed from the context of society and its betterment. He further went on to say that the remarkable achievements of Bhagavan's educational system have to be replicated to benefit all humanity, and the Institute of Sathya Sai Education in Thailand and the Sathya Sai School in Zambia have proved that it is indeed possible even without Bhagavan being physically present, as His Grace and Compassion are not bound by the spatial limitations.

Smt. Kumud Bansal, Secretary to the Government of India, Dept. of Elementary Education and Literacy, speaking next, paid compliments to the students of the SSSIHL who impressed her much during her short stay here. She observed that while discipline problems in the country's schools are not too many, the same cannot be said of the colleges and universities. The educational institutions run by Bhagavan stand out because of the high calibre and conduct of the students of His university and prayed for His continued guidance and blessings. She also noted that 40% of the country's citizens are below 20 years of age and they have to be nurtured well to lead the country to a bright future.

The Vice-Chancellor of the Institute, Sri A.V. Gokak then presented his concluding remarks wherein he summarised for the benefit of all the deliberations of the conference. Sri Gokak said that the first and foremost challenge is change at a bewildering rate. There is lopsided growth due to enhanced emphasis on intelligence and science without adequate emphasis on spiritual content. The conference also concluded that the system of education must extend beyond the school and college, with the student having a clear vision of his role in society.

The system of education must provide for a balanced development of body, mind and soul and stimulate the student towards lifelong learning. Touching upon the nature of the curriculum to precipitate such a change, Sri Gokak said there must be a proper harmony among different subjects with humanity having as much importance as science. Speaking on the role of the teacher, Sri Gokak stressed that he should not play a mere mechanical role, but has to

transform the student. He has to first transform himself and then recreate the experience in his students.

Human Values have a crucial role to play in the education system, and even science subjects must have a human values component. He said that all the major religions lead to the same five human values. In conclusion, he said that once we imbibe educare, harmonious relations will prevail within the individual, between individuals and nature and the world.

This brought the curtain down on a truly enlightening conference that not only highlighted the problems faced by the modern day education system but also held out a ready solution in the form of the human values based approach adopted in Bhagavan's schools and colleges.

AUG 20-21: 'RECONNECT' - MANAGEMENT ALUMNI MEET

It was an emotional trip down memory lane for the former students of the School of Business Management, Accounting and Finance, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Prasanthi Nilayam, when they gathered at the Lotus Feet of their beloved Swami on the 20th and 21st of August for their Alumni Meet aptly named 'Reconnect'. This meet was organized on the occasion of the eve of the 20th anniversary of the department coinciding with the 80th year of the Advent of Bhagawan.

If you have read the cover story of August issue, you will know how ever since the School of Business Management, Accounting and Finance, offering MBA (Master of Business Administration), was started on 21st August, 1986, Bhagavan took a keen interest in fostering the business leaders of the future into change agents who would spread His message of values into the corporate world. For many years after the inception of the department, Bhagavan would visit the Institute every week to deliver talks on management to the students. It was during these talks that Bhagavan succinctly summarized the science of management as 'Man Management'. This concept is only now catching on in business thought, but Bhagavan had already identified it as the key to successful management more than a decade ago. It was to offer their gratitude to Bhagavan for all the care and attention He had showered on them during their stay as students that more than 450 members of the alumni from all over the world gathered at Prashanti Nilayam to bask yet again in the sunshine of His Love and thus 'reconnect' and 'recharge' themselves.

On the evening of 20th, around 3.00 p.m. Swami arrived into the Kulwant Hall. He took a full round and to everybody's surprise, the car drove out of the *Mandir*! Guess where?…..Right into the stadium towards the Shanti Vedika. That is where a real big team consisting of all the hostel teachers and the I Year Post Graduate students were making mega arrangements for the evening dinner.

Swami went towards the gallery. By then two faculty members, Dr. Naren Ramji and Prof. Sudhir Bhaskar had reached the spot and upon being asked

by Swami, they mentioned that the Business Management Faculty were sponsoring a special dinner for all the alumni, current students and Institute Staff. Swami smiled and blessed the programme. A totally unexpected act of Grace! And the dinner session, every alumni would agree was an unforgettable experience!

Swami returned from the stadium in half an hour and after He came onto the stage, Sri A.V. Gokak, Vice-Chancellor of the Institute, gave the welcome address. He was followed by Sudhindran, an alumnus, who outlined the purpose of the Meet and expressed immense gratitude to Bhagavan on behalf of all the alumni. Brother Sanjay Mahalingam, a current research scholar at the School, then performed the Master of Ceremonies.

Swami then very graciously blessed their card, their Souvenir '*Fragrance*' – consisting of 80 articles written by alumni members of the Business School, an interactive VCD, consisting of the theme song with a video, clippings of several interactions of Swami with Management students over the years and other Hostel Life video clippings. Another special item that Swami blessed, was the colourful Brochure about the School of Business Management.

And then there was the Toolkit distribution. The alumni had arranged for distribution of comprehensive toolkits and uniforms to 80 needy youth trained as electricians, carpenters and plumbers belonging to villages surrounding Prashanti Nilayam. Though possessing the necessary skills these men continued to remain unemployed as they did not have the wherewithal to procure the necessary tools. But, now Bhagavan has gifted them not merely toolkits but also the means to live a life of dignity.

Following this, there was a panel discussion on "Man Management – Relevance of Values in the Business World" moderated by Sri Krishnamurthy, an alumnus. Seven members of the alumni spanning various sectors of the industry and occupying senior positions in their respective organizations participated in the discussion that focused on how Bhagavan's teachings helped them to deal with the pressures and difficult situations that arise in corporate life, drawing on their own experiences and insights. The discussion was supplemented with several personal illustrations and proved very enlightening.

One very significant point that emerged during the discussion was how one can reconcile the pursuit of corporate excellence with spirituality. Sri Karthik Shenoi, CEO, iCap Solutions Pvt. Ltd., illustrated how this reconciliation can be achieved by recalling an allegory given by Bhagavan. Bhagavan compares the pursuit of worldly goals to the attempt to get the coconuts on a coconut tree by running up the shadow of the tree on the ground – a fruitless enterprise. But, when one actually climbs up the coconut tree, one's shadow is also seen climbing the tree.

What this analogy reveals to us, is that according highest priority to spiritual goals is not necessarily divergent with life in the material world. In fact, worldly

success is added on to us as a matter of course on the spiritual path. Speaking about the means of dealing with stress, the panelists concluded that stress arises whenever self-interest dominates one's thinking. But, when we follow Bhagavan's teaching that the feeling of 'We' must be placed above the 'I' feeling, one is not affected by stressful situations.

Another member said that one must follow the principle of 100% commitment and 0% attachment, leaving the burden of victory or defeat to the Lord. Stress, they said stood for 'Sai To the Rescue in Every Sticky Situation'. Teamwork, which is an important quality that every employer looks for, is something that students of Bhagavan do not learn merely in theory but it comes to the fore during the Annual Sports and Cultural Meet and the community service programmes, which are regular and integral parts of the education at Bhagavan's university. The discussion thus showcased how spirituality can be integrated into our daily life to make it more meaningful and enriching.

Swami, who was very keenly listening to the panellists, smiled and looked very pleased after the discussion ended. But He did not stop at that. Swami asked for cool fruit juices to be served to all the panellists right there in Kulwant Hall and even called all the seven for a special interaction in the interview room. It was such a moving experience! It was the overwhelming motherly love of the beloved lord who was very thrilled seeing them after a long time and immensely pleased with their performance.

On the morning of 21st, after an introductory talk by Sri Subash Subramanian, an MBA alumnus and currently a Research Scholar in the School of Business Management, Accounting and Finance, there were talks by two alumni.

The first speaker, Sri Amar Vivek, is a practicing lawyer in the High Court of Punjab and Haryana and also at the Supreme Court of India. He belongs to the first batch of MBA students from Bhagavan's university. He has been engaged in many rural service projects most notably, the Sri Sathya Sai Grameen Jagruthi programme under which a hospital, a school, a vocational training center and a sports school are being run for the benefit of the rural poor completely free of charge. His service programmes have earned him recognition from the Government of India and he was conferred the National Youth Award. He narrated how Bhagavan had personally guided him in setting up and managing these service projects, His unseen Hand helping him ford over obstacles on the way. He also narrated two instances where by standing up to his principles he managed, by Bhagavan's grace, to turn two seemingly impossible situations in his favour.

Sri Ashok Sundaresan, who spoke next, is a Chartered Accountant by profession, and an active member of the Youth wing of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organization, Tamil Nadu. He said that being a student of Bhagavan is a privilege and opportunity and also a great responsibility. To emphasize the good fortune of students in being contemporaries of Bhagavan, he narrated

an experience of late Prof N.Kasturi wherein, from the first floor, Sri Kasturi sees luminous beings in the place where the students sit and Swami communicating to them with His eyes. This, Bhagavan revealed to Kasturi, was how the entire creation was being managed. He also recalled a moving incident wherein a poor family from Mahabubnagar Dist. of Andhra Pradesh traveled to Chennai when the construction of the Chennai Water project was going on, to contribute in the form of physical labour to the project. This was to express gratitude to Swami for the water project in Mahabubnagar.

After the talks, there was a programme entitled '*Yaadein*' by the alumni. It was a musical programme interspersed with sharing of experiences by alumni members. which was anchored by brother Shaurya Sinh and Madhusudan Rao Naidu. Each song was a success and the experiences too were touching. The theme song '*Yadein*' was the icing on the cake.

At the end of the programme, everyone realized that though they may have left the portals of the Institute, they can never leave Swami nor can Swami ever leave them; Swami was always with them and their bond with Him was eternal and heart to heart.

After the Mandir session, the alumni assembled in the Institute auditorium at 10.00 a.m. for an interaction with the faculty members. At 10.30 a.m., the session began with an introductory talk by the current Dean of the School of Business Management, Prof. U.S. Rao. He was followed by Prof. V.E. Ramamurthy speaking about the purpose of the meet. Then came Prof. Sehgal the former and the first Dean of the School followed by Sri Hari an alumnus of the Institute who gave an overview of the Alumni Website being designed by a technical team. This was followed by two talks – one by brother Dhruv Sachdev an alumnus of the first batch of MBA and the other by brother B. Karthik – an alumnus of the first batch of MFM students. Both made a very good presentation.

Then came the most appreciated presentation by the most sought after person – Sri V.Y.C.S. Vijay – the central coordinator of the Alumni Meet. He was indeed the backbone of this entire Meet. He was very aptly welcomed onto the stage by a standing applause by all the alumni members. Vijay very briefly spoke about the organising of Reconnect. Dr. Naren Ramji followed him, delivering the vote of thanks and expressing gratitude to all the groups and teams that worked so seamlessly, with dedication and commitment to make the Meet a success.

In the afternoon, the management students of the Institute presented a drama entitled, "*Karishye Vachanam Tava*" meaning, "Command, and I shall obey!" The drama depicted how two young management graduates who had recently joined Navajivan Pharma Co. face many difficulties and disappointments due to the unethical behaviour of a manager, how they overcome these difficulties, and become instrumental in guiding the company to make decisions that go beyond just financial criteria and contribute to the welfare of the society. The drama addressed many issues and ethical dilemmas that face the managers of today's corporate world and how they should be dealt with by discrimination

and a clear conscience.

After the drama, Bhagavan granted photos to the participants. Bhagavan also blessed and launched the website of the Institute – www.sssihl.org . The programme concluded with *arati* and Bhagavan retired to His residence.

It has been quite an eventful month and the one to come promises to be even more lively for we will be celebrating the Krishna Janmastami, Ganesh Chaturthi and the Onam festivals. Look forward to our reports on all these and more next month.

Till that time we pray for Swami's blessings for you and your family. Sai Ram!

MISCELLANEOUS

"HIS LOVE… THROUGHOUT MY LIFE"

by Mrs. Geeta Mohan Ram

Mrs. Geeta Mohan Ram comes from a family which has been associated with Swami for the last four generations. She is the daughter of Dr. Padmanabhan, an ardent devotee and a familiar figure in 'Brindavan', Swami's ashram in Bangalore. Her great grandfather, Mr. Seshagiri Rao, came to Swami in 1943 and was the temple priest of Prashanthi Nilayam for many years. Having come to Swami at a very tender age, Mrs. Geeta Ram's life is full of wonderful Sai experiences and amazing anecdotes which are both interesting and illuminating. Currently, she lives in Washington, DC.

This is the talk we aired on Radio Sai sometime back. Full of wonderful instances, we have divided this talk into two parts, Part - I and Part - II, for ease of reading.

PART 1

Whenever I talk about my own experiences, the child growing up at His Feet or about my youth or adulthood, I always go back in time and enjoy that incident. I was fortunate enough to be born in a family, where my great grandfather came to Swami in 1943, so ever since then we have had the fortune to enjoy His physical presence since we were living in Bangalore.

The First Incident…

In my childhood it used to take almost 11 hours to go to Puttaparthi, by train, bus, bullock cart, walking and wading in the river. We had Swami with us from 6 in the morning until 10 in the night. In fact my great aunt used to tell Swami, “Please go now we have to do our household work. You are always with us and we can not wash our clothes.” It sounds like a dream.

Now He tells us, “My blessings are with you, you can go now.” In those days He would call us and say, “Stay one more day.” I will now share with you the first incident - if not for which I would not be speaking before you today if it were not for His Grace a month ago.

On November 22nd last month at our Sai centre in South Barrister, we had planned a very big 4-day programme for Swami’s Birthday, for Thanksgiving weekend. Our programme would begin on the 23rd afternoon, so on 22nd evening I had been very busy. I had been the Education coordinator there, and since it was a big programme I had been very busy for 3 months getting the children ready.

ATM Robbery

So on 22nd evening around 5.30pm I decided I would buy some flowers and fruits for my morning worship; so I went to a store, which happened to be in a very big shopping area. There was a crowd buying things for Thanksgiving, and on the way I went to an ATM. I parked my car to draw some money and opened the door to get out, but as I did so a man ran over the grassy area from behind and opened the back door of my car and got in. He put his left arm around me and in his right hand he had a knife which he put to my throat and said, “Drive, drive, drive!”

I could not drive the car since I had not shut the door, so I said, “Look if it is the money you want I will give it to you.” He said, “No, don’t you see they are chasing me - drive!”

I said, “Let me shut the door” and in that delay Swami’s grace appeared. Due to that delay two police cars, which had apparently been chasing him, blocked my car from both ends. Then six police officers came towards my car. But when they realized that he had a knife around my neck they stopped fifteen feet away from my car, so they could see him and he could see them.

I could not see him, but I have a little picture of Swami stuck to my car’s glass shield and I had my hand on it. As the police were approaching I started to speak to him, “Look if you do anything to me you will be in trouble - you would be in prison for life. But if you give up now you will be in prison for 2 or 3 years. Neither can you run out of the car nor can I drive you out - so don’t you think you should give up.”

“How is Geeta?”

There was a pause and then he said, “How come you are not afraid?”

I said, “What is the use of being afraid. You have complete control over me and I cannot do anything. If it is my time to go I have to. My children are very much settled, but you will not be able to go anywhere, so you would be better off if you give yourself up.” There was a pause again, and of course all the while it was Swami who was talking through me.

Then he said, “OK”, opened the door and put his hands up in the air and started to walk towards the police officers. As he passed my car the police pounced on him and it was terrible to see police pounce on a human being who has submitted.

They dragged him away and threw him in the police car and then two policemen came to enquire whether I was fine. But I asked them why they had to treat him in that way when he submitted, and how does the law work out if a lawyer is with him? They were all thinking I was slightly crazy or I had misplaced sympathies, whereas I was supposed to be worried about a lawyer for myself. Then of course they started to ask me about what I had spoken to him so that he had opened the car door and given himself up.

So I explained all that happened and they could not believe it. So that's what happened that day. So I guess I have been a troublesome child to Swami all through. In fact Swami joked with me once - "Everybody celebrates My Birthday and you always give Me work on My birthday."

It happened that my parents were there in Parthi on the 24th and they were not aware of what had happened. On that day when my mother was sitting in *Darshan* Swami came towards her and said, **"How is Geetha?"**

She said, "She is alright Swami, she is fine."

Then Swami said **"Oh! Is she fine?"**

My mother was taken aback because she realised that Swami knows something about me. Then she said, "Swami, I talked to her on the 10th and she was fine then, after which I did not contact her."

Then Swami told her, **"Now she is fine."**

She thought that maybe I was sick and that now I must be alright. So when she came back from Parthi, I told her of this incident and then she realized what Swami tried to tell her that day.

Swami Is Always With Us

When Swami came back to Brindavan on 2nd of December, my father was there - he is the man who walks behind Swami to collect letters. Swami described to him all that had happened to me. And Swami said, **"She is crazy, she is always crazy, she was asking for a lawyer for that fellow."** The point I want to make here is that Swami is always with us and He will take care of us, but sometimes we don't know or believe it, because the quality of life we lead is sometimes not up to Swami's expectations. So things like this reassure us that Swami is always with us and He knows every thought, word and action.

This is How Life is - Snakes and Ladders

In those days Swami used to come and stay with us in Bangalore and He was part of our family. For many years in my childhood He was a wonderful uncle for me. He used to talk with elders in the evening but also had a special time for us children where he used to tell us either stories, or play some games with us. Even though He would play games with us He used to teach us lessons in His own way. One of the games He would always play with us was Snakes and Ladders.

We children would say, "Swami we don't want to play this game with You, as You always win."

The dice would roll the number He wanted. Then He would say, "No, no I will play like you."

Then He would be behind for some time losing and suddenly He would be again right at the top and then say, “Look at you useless people - you don’t even know how to play Snakes and Ladders! **This is how life is, full of snakes and ladders. Sometimes you go up and sometimes you come down, but your goal is to reach 100 - divinity. To do that you have to face both snakes and ladders, at the same time you have your set of dice in the hands of God. He will take you across in a boat.”**

Dial Vibhuti

This incident happened to me when I was eight years old. At that time, my grandmother who lived in Parthi was sent by Swami to Bangalore for an eye operation. When she went through the checkup she was told that she needed surgery. She had deep faith in Swami and wanted to go back to Parthi to pray for Swami’s blessings.

But my father said, “Why do you want to go? He sent you.”

“No, these doctors will make me blind, so I need His blessings,” she replied.

My father did not agree to the request. That night my parents had gone somewhere and my grandmother was telling me that she is dependent on my father to take her to Parthi and he was not ready to take her, but she wanted Swami’s blessings.

Suddenly the phone rings and there was a long distance call from Bukkapatnam and Swami was there on the telephone! Those days there was no phone service in Parthi. He said, “Is this Geetha?” I said, “Yes, Swami” He said, **“Is the old lady complaining? Put her on the phone.”** Then she started complaining to Swami that she is not allowed to come to Him and that the doctors will blind her and all other things possible.

On the other side Swami said that His blessings are with her; but then my grandmother replied, “Your blessings are there but I want your *Vibhuti*, without it how can I go.” That was the kind of personal love she had for Him. Swami says, **“You can demand. I am your mother.”**

So I think He said to give the phone to me, and then He said, “Geetha, do you find a piece of paper anywhere there.” I said, “Yes, Swami.” “Put it near the phone.” So I put the telephone down and there came a mound of *Vibhuti* onto the paper, enough for the whole month! I knew that the phone service does not provide such things, so I was surprised!

And then Swami said very sweetly in Telugu **“*Vachinda?* (Did you get it?) Give it to the old woman - she will be very happy.”**

Her Only Refuge

I was very happy and excited about this experience, but later on after all the excitement had gone down I started to think that if we believe Him to be God

He can do anything. But looking on the other side of the miracle, the old lady's faith could draw Swami from across 100 miles, across the telephone wires, and He responded to her whose only refuge was Him. And I learnt that **the greatest miracle is the Lord's response to the devotee's prayer made in complete faith**.

Swami taught this lesson to us children, who were then so troublesome. It used to happen that Swami would create Paries chocolates, and we used to ask Him to create some other chocolate such as Cadburys which was rare. So from that kind of mentality I realized that He is not here for creating such petty things but something more. So in this way, due to His love, I started to learn many lessons.

Sai's Non-Violence

One such wonderful lesson I learnt during the Summer Course. Swami always tells us that we should not destroy anything because we are not capable of creating anything. During a Summer Course I happened to be there with a friend and that particular day the subject for discussion was non-violence. We heard many speeches and in the evening my friend and I would make notes sitting down in the lawns. As we were talking and making notes for the day we were pulling grass from the lawn and in between us was created a heap of grass.

Then my friend said, "Look at this Geetha - we talked about non-violence and we have pulled out so much grass." I said, "Why do you continuously speak philosophy, it's just grass," and that was end of the conversation.

Every day during the Summer Course we had to get up at 4 am and go for *Omkaram*, *Gayathri* chanting etc. but I was not a person for all these - I wanted to sleep. So I would sit at the back of the hall and would sleep. One day as I was taking my nap there was a tap on my shoulder. I turned around and there was Swami, catching me red handed sleeping in meditation. I thought that that He would kick me out of the course and what would my father say?

Swami said, "Don't make noise, come outside." We went to the rose garden, which was right next to the tent. Then He said, "Hey, what did you do yesterday?" I thought that I was saved because Swami did not mention my sleeping.

I said, "Swami, I don't remember anything about yesterday." Then He said, **"No, no what were you doing with your friend?"** I said, "I was all the time talking to her Swami." "Not talking - did you not pull grass! How can you pull out a living thing? It is not an inanimate thing, come here."

The Rose Touch of Pure Love

Then He took me to a rose bush and touched a tiny little rose bud, which was nowhere near blossoming. And just as you would see in a video the rose bud began to grow bigger and bigger, finally blossoming into a red rose. A foolish thing came out of my mouth, “Swami, You can do it but I can’t.”

Swami replied **“No, no you can do it too; come here.” Then He held my hand and made me touch another rose bud. The same thing happened - it grew bigger and bigger and turned into a rose.** Swami said, “**If you show love to anything in this world, it will respond.** But you have to show it the way I do it, that is what you have to learn; learn to show love, don’t destroy. Go and sit down.”

So I survived the Summer Course. But I had learnt a great lesson not to hurt anything. Then in 1988 Swami told me “Go to America.” I said, “Swami when You had me married You promised me that you would keep me with you.” Swami replied, “I kept you for 10 years - now you go to America”. So I went to America. In the first summer my husband was mowing the lawns and I told him, “Mohan, for pulling out a few blades of grass I got into trouble and you are going to cut the whole area. I cannot go back to Puttaparthi.”

The Correct Medicine

In 1992 Swami had called us for an interview. As soon as I entered the interview room Swami said, “In America you have to cut the grass.” By now I was a grown up lady with two children and that experience had happened when I was young girl. Swami laughed and said, “That is just a haircut.” When I was 15 I needed that lesson, now when 30 I knew the difference. So Swami’s teachings changes depending upon our age. Swami says, “When three patients come with stomach pain they have to be given different medicine; they cannot have the same medicine.”

He always says, “We have to have harmony in thought, word and action.” He is the right person to see it personified in. I will tell you two incidents.

When He told me to go to America I cried that I would not, but then He finally said I have to go. So my husband came before me and two months later I came along with my children who were five years old. I had heavy baggage since all my relatives and friends were giving things for their people in America and in this way my luggage was increasing.

Then my father started telling me, “What is this? Swami says less luggage and you are carrying so much. You are not following any of Swami’s teachings.”

“I Will Lift Her Suitcase”

He generalizes in this way and so we had a little argument in the car about this. We went to Brindavan and there Swami said, “What - Padmanabham as usual scolding you?” My father said, “Swami she is not listening to any of Your teachings; she is taking three suitcases.”

So Swami said, “Why are you worried - it is her suitcase, let her carry what she wants.” Then my father said, “Swami, it is very heavy she cannot lift it.” Swami said, **“Are you lifting it? I will lift her suitcase.”**

All this was in fun and we all laughed. I did not give much thought to it and landed in San Francisco. As my father had predicted I could not carry my suitcases, as they were so heavy. My problem was to put them on the trolley, which I could not do and my five-year-old sons (twins) were going here and there.

Somehow I managed but then there was an announcement on the PA system announcing my name, to come to the Singapore airlines counter. There a lady told me that there is a gentlemen here waiting to help you out with your luggage. There was a very nice Afro-American gentleman wearing identification and a badge. I forgot about what happened in Brindavan; instead I thought what a wonderful man my husband is, he has sent somebody to help me.

Since this was the first time I was coming many papers had to be cleared and all this time this tall man was with me. And when we came to customs, he said, “Are you going to open up the suitcases - the poor lady has been here for an hour.” So customs cleared us.

We came out and my husband was there, he turned the car and as he put the luggage in I said, “We have to pay the porter.” We searched for him but he was not there. And then as we were going in the car I narrated all that had happened in the interview with Swami: the argument with my father and the final word of Swami that He would carry my luggage. As I said these words it struck me.

The next morning as my father saw Swami, He said “You were right Padmanabham - what did she carry in those suitcases, they were so heavy.” Ever since then, I make sure that if I ask Him for help I will never pray to Him to lift my luggage. When I later met Swami I said, “Swami, I made you lift my heavy suitcases,” Swami replied **“What? I came to lift the burden of the world, how do your suitcases matter?”**

Swami’s Seat Beside Me

That is my Swami - in every single way He shows us that He is there. Even a simple joke turned out to be true. Even when we joke he hears us. My two children were fighting in the car to sit in front and I told them that they couldn’t sit there. This went on for many days and one fine day I said, “Don’t you know that it’s Swami’s seat beside me and I have to drive, so you cannot sit there.” Then the argument stopped and they would sit quietly at the back.

After four years I went to Parthi, since Swami told me not to come for four years. Then in *Darshan* lines in Parthi, Swami said, **“Front seat is for me! But you are keeping all your audio tapes there - where can I sit?”** I was

not telling my children the truth – in fact I never believed Swami to be in that seat. I told them that to make them stop the argument.

So basically Swami showed me - no harmony in thought, word and deed. Because of this disharmony we do not see Him with us. He always gives an example; He tells us that mind is like a monkey, it cannot sit still; it goes here and there, not only is it a monkey but it is also a mad monkey. Also it is a drunken mad monkey. And then again he says not only is it drunken, but it is also bitten by a scorpion.

Beginning of *Akhanda Bhajan*

I would like to share one wonderful experience of faith and love now. In 1945 my grandfather started the *Akhanda Bhajan* that we now do in a global way in the month of November. At that time we used to do it as a family *Bhajan*. Eight families would get together for *Bhajans* on every Thursday in their houses by rotation. So this went on from 1943 to 1944.

They finished one year and then thought on that day let us have a 24-hour repetition of *Namasmarana*. So my grandfather wrote to Swami that He should bless them to start *Akhanda Bhajan*. The reply came, 'My blessings are there and I am coming for *Akhanda Bhajan*.'

So that's how it started - Swami would come on Wednesday to our house at lunchtime and after that He would say, **"Where is *Akhanda Bhajan*? Have you rented a hall? I want to see the hall."** And there we would make some flower decorations and we would place Swami's photo. Swami would say, "Look at my photo; **I am not smiling - change that photo**." In fact, what we have learnt is that we have to pay attention to every little detail when we are arranging something.

On one such occasion we were all doing the assigned jobs and Swami was looking at each one of us doing our jobs. Then after a few minutes we saw that Swami was not there and that He was behind the stage where there were two rooms. One, where we arranged a table and chair for Swami to relax, and the other was a storage room where we had put our things and left our slippers.

So we were searching where Swami was and we saw Swami arranging everybody's sandals in a neat single row. Immediately we told our elders and they came running to stop Swami. Swami said, "You people were so busy, you forgot to put these sandals in a proper manner, so I am putting them properly as I did not have any work."

Devotion Renders Cure

On one occasion before the *Bhajan* a young man had come to my house. He had some skin problem but he was a wonderful singer. He asked my father to convey to Swami to bless him since he had a skin problem. My father refused

and suggested that he can have Swami's *Darshan* during the *Bhajan* and if Swami wills it, it will cure.

He attended *Bhajan* and began singing. In the evening Swami came for dinner to my house and told my mother to go and attend the *Bhajan* and that He would stay back.

Suddenly at 10 pm it started to rain. Swami said, "Padmanabhan get the car I have to go to *Bhajans*." My father suggested that He could relax as He had been busy 6 hours and he would take Him in the early morning. But Swami said that He wanted to go and He asked me also to come. And there the young man was singing with a most devoted tone, fully immersed.

And as He sang "*Darasha Dikhavo*" ('Grant me *Darshan'*) Swami entered and stood in front of him, without him knowing and everybody in the hall was looking at this. As he finished the *Bhajan* he opened his eyes and **Swami bent down and blessed his head - and right in front of our eyes all the patches on his body disappeared**. That is what devotion can do. How can we not love such a Lord who was supposed to retire for the day but comes in the middle of the night to answer prayers?

PART 2

Silver Service

Sometimes He even answers prayers which come out of anger. One day after I just came to US, I had not even unpacked my luggage, one elderly lady had come to my house and I had wanted to give her fruits and *kumkum* (vermillion), a south Indian custom.

I was looking for the silver container which had the kumkum and did not find it. Since my childhood my parents have brought me up in such a way that I don't come with any problem to them. So that day I was very irritated within. And I was telling my husband, "Why does He put me through this kind of test; can't He give me a better test; I am eligible for a better test." Anyway, I unpacked my boxes next day and not finding the silver container I became even more upset.

And in that irritation I said to myself that He is all the time so busy with these college students, so He does not remember us. I had hardly said this and half an hour later there is a knock on my door. I opened the door and there is an Indian person that I don't know, who asked me whether I am Geetha, Padmanabhan's daughter?

She said, "I am on my way to the airport; in India your parents wanted me to give a small package to you, telling that Swami had given this package to be given during the birthday celebration." I open the package and inside it was a silver container with kumkum in it!

'I Have Come to Your Home'

I would like to share an incident on service which happened in 1970. Swami is so particular about service and He wants us to do service with love.

Swami had asked my mother to visit Europe to go to some Sai centers there. There was a center at London and Swami had written letters to them to take care of her. So before leaving He called us for an interview and in that interview room Swami was talking to everybody. There was one particular lady who, whenever Swami paused, was asking Swami to come to her town.

She was asking Him, even though Swami was ignoring her. Then finally Swami became irritated and said, "What? I have come to your town. I have not only come to your town but also come to your home." She was making her case even more emphatic and she said, "No, Swami, you have not come Swami."

Then He changed the topic and Swami said, **"How is the *Seva* going on in your town?"** She said that it is going on well. In those days Swami used to suggest that everyday when we cook we keep a morsel of rice and collect it from every house and give it to somebody, so that we have that feeling of service every day. Then this lady started speaking about the service activities in her town, since she was in charge and she was proudly recounting all the activities. Swami said "Very happy."

'Two Rupees Rice or Five Rupees Rice'

Then He said, "Two rupees rice or five rupees rice?" This lady said that different people bring different rice. Then Swami said, "I am not asking about other people I am asking what rice do you get?" She was still reluctant and said "Good rice, Swami."

Swami retorted "What! For poor people, for *Narayana Seva* two rupees rice and for family five rupees rice? Two rupees rice which is not cleaned and in which stones are there - that is what you are serving with." Even then this lady said "No Swami."

Then Swami got up from the chair and said, "You don't believe me, **two years back I came to your house as a beggar and you gave Me rice which you saved for *Narayana Seva.*** You got it in a red cloth and gave it to Me - you don't believe Me wait!" He went inside the inner room, coming out with a red bag and said, "Did you not give this to me?" You can imagine… that poor lady was sobbing.

The basic message, which Swami was trying to convey, was to **do service with love**. If you don't feel love you better not do service. If you don't see Sai in the person whom you are serving then don't do the service. This was a very strong lesson, which I cannot forget to this day.

Subbulakshmi Surprise

There is another incident, which conveys how Swami teaches us simple things in beautiful ways. When I was a young girl in Brindavan we were given some jobs, as there was no *Sevadal* gardener and cook.

Everything was done by us. So my job was to set up the altar in Swami's bungalow and I used to come only once a week since I had school on other days. That particular weekend I did not want to go because MS Subbulakshmi (a very famous classical vocalist) was giving a concert in Bangalore - Swami is always there, but MS comes only once a while! But my parents were very strict and committed to Swami. They said, "Once you are committed to Swami you should do the work." Then I said "Why can't you do it for today."

Then my parents replied that I should have informed Swami last week. Then I requested for half the concert. Mother said that we can come back after Swami's *Bhajan*. Then I grumbled, "Swami sits and goes on answering questions after *Bhajan* and He will take an hour." But I had to go.

Everyone was doing their job but I had a long face. Swami was moving around the house and He looked at me, saying "Hey 'castor oil face', what is wrong with you, why are you banging my pictures? What happened, an argument with mother?" "Swami, today there is a concert by MS Subbalaxmi in Bangalore." Then Swami said, **"She is a great singer isn't she. Then why did you not go?"** "Swami, my mother told me I have to do my duty first." Swami replied, "She could have cleaned the altar. At least she should have done that much. OK, you can go a little late, but if I start speaking after *Bhajans* then you will be late." So Swami was speaking of all that I had told my mother. Then Swami said, **"Today I will not speak after *Bhajans* - you all go for the programme."** I was thrilled.

Bhajans started and Swami was also singing. After sometime Swami asked everybody to wait and that He would come back. Five minutes later Swami walks in with Subbulakshmi! We were all shocked and Swami said, "Subbalaxmi, didn't you have a concert today in Bangalore?" "No Swami," she replied, "There was a misprint in the newspaper, it's tomorrow."Swami told her "See that young girl sitting there, she loves your music so much."

He then gave her a list of songs which I like and asked her to sing those songs. She was a very good devotee of Swami and with all devotion she gave a private concert to the Lord. Then Swami called me and said "**See when you do your duty, God will reward you in more ways than you expect.** You heard the concert today; you can go to the concert tomorrow as well."

Vibhuti Chemistry

One other thing He did for me concerns my inadequate grasp of chemistry. Even with Swami it was a joke, but He used to tell me to study hard. It was during 2nd year, which would be the last year and I thought I would get away with it. I had a practical exam the next day and had prepared the whole of the night. Swami was in Brindavan, so I told my mother that I would go for *Darshan*. My mother started telling me that I could go tomorrow after the

exam. Then I told my mother that I had studied enough, but I was not going to pass and instead I would like to go for *Darshan*. When we arrived for *Darshan* Swami came straight to me and said "*Papam (so sorry)* chemistry exam is it not? Did you study?" I said, "Yes Swami, but I have forgotten whatever I studied." Swami said, "No, I have seen you studying hard, what happened?"

Then He created *Vibhuti* saying, **"Tomorrow when you go for the exam, put it in the test tube."** And that was only occasion when I got 98% in chemistry. If you run to Him for everything then He is there for everything.

Food for Love

One more way of showing His love for me happened at the Anantapur Women's College, which was started in 1968. At that time the World Conference was going on in Bombay, so Swami asked my mother to attend the conference because she was going to be a coordinator. And for the first time my mother left me on my own.

So since my mother was not there, my father told me that he would take me to a nice restaurant for breakfast after *Darshan*. For some reason I was missing my mother that day, and in *Darshan* Swami said, **"Missing mummy is it?"** I said, "Yes, Swami" and then Swami said, "Don't feel bad. At 10.30am I am going to Anantapur to see the construction. You come with me."

So He instructed my father to follow Him by car to Anantapur. So we were following Swami and my father being a serious person does not like to sing or talk much. So He told me not to talk and told me to do *Bhajans* till Anantapur. So I started to sing very reluctantly and he did not even follow. I had to sing the first and second line with no breakfast. My father said, "Do not stop or talk because Swami can see us from the front."

After 25 miles Swami's car stopped, and Swami gets down from the car and not even wearing sandals, walks to our car and says, "Hey! How many *Bhajans* are you making her sing? The poor girl is hungry, you have not fed her anything, you are making her sing so many *Bhajans* and you are not even following?"

Then Swami goes to the car finds some fruits and says, **"I know you do not like fruits but for now you eat them and as soon as we reach Anantapur I will arrange for lunch."**

Watch for the Wave

In Anantapur Swami was going through all the classrooms and in one of the rooms Swami's sister had prepared some food from Parthi and had brought it to Anantapur.

Swami had taken His plate and was serving all the dishes onto the plate, and people suggested that Swami should sit and eat. He said, "You know Padmanabhan's daughter, a small girl, has not had anything since morning".

He was skipping some dishes, I was wondering why, and then He said, "You do not like garlic is it not? I am skipping those." I was embarrassed and said, "Swami, you have not eaten - how can I eat?" Swami said, "**No, no the children have not eaten, so how can elders eat?** If I stand here you will not eat. I am going for one more round, by the time I come back you should finish the whole thing."

That was Swami's love, so thoughtful, like a mother who could not bear the fact that a child is hungry. In the evening Swami said, "There is no point in you coming to Brindavan. Near Devanahalli, I will take a left turn and you will go straight. Watch out for me, I will wave." Near the junction He pulls down the window and waves at me. These are the kinds of lessons He teaches, so that when I am a mother, a wife, a teacher, I can put it into practice.

Kindergarten Chaos

I will tell you a very strange incident which happened a few years back. I used to teach 5-year-old kindergarten boys. There was this boy who came to my class, whom many had told me to be careful of because he was a terror.

On the first day as he enters the class he picks up a chair and throws it at the other children, then he throws some hard blocks and carried on in this way. I tried everything - talking to the child, to the mother, to the director of the school, but his mischief went on. I failed as a teacher, and a child used to get hurt everyday and that parent would come and complain. Everyday I would tell my husband about this child and he would suggest that I quit the job - but that is not the way.

After four months I was fed up and prayed to Swami, "You had told me to love everybody." (When I was a *Balvikas* teacher He had told me that 'Your children are *kamaputras,* born of desire, whereas ***Balvikas* children are *Premaputras,* born of love, so as they are more precious you should give them more love.**')

I said, "You told me to love all the children, but I cannot love this child anymore. Everyday I enter the classroom I wish he is absent. There is something lacking in me as a teacher. It's not his mistake as he is just 5 years old. I blame You because You were my teacher and You did not teach me properly. If the child does not change tomorrow then I will resign. You will fail as a psychologist and I will fail as a teacher."

Acting Handsome

So I threatened Swami and then went to work. The child would dress well and everyday ask me if the clothes were smart. So he asked me the same question again. The words that came were not what I had planned, I said "You

look handsome, but **you should act handsome**." He asked me "What does 'act handsome' mean?"

I said "You should not only look good outside but also inside, so that you are good to your friends, so that they like you." He said, "That means I should not beat up anybody?" I said, "Yes".

Then for next 20 minutes there was no head injury in my class. He comes back and says "Does that mean that even if somebody annoys me I should not be mean to them?" I said that he should not hurt anybody. Then he said, "That's really tough", "That is tough" I replied, "But you can come and tell me and I can talk to the one who is annoying you."

All the kids were playing in the ground and there were two boys arguing between themselves, and this boy said, "Hey you guys, you are not acting handsome, start acting handsome."

The boy changed slowly. He comes and meets me every Christmas; he is now in fourth grade. This time he said, "Do you know I am the guy who resolves the conflicts in my classroom." Swami works out everything. Two years ago when I went to Parthi He asked me, **"How is that school rowdy?"**

Share Love

One wonderful example of His Omnipresence is that He once told me that I should be speaking to people about Him. I asked "Swami why are you doing this to me?" and He replied, **"Do you think I gave all My love all these years to you just for free? So share it with everybody."**

One day Swami told me to speak on non-violence as the Vice-President was coming. So I was very excited. I prepared a very good speech but the next day when I saw the people I was very nervous and I said that I would not speak. Swami said, "Why are you scared? Show me what you have prepared. You are going to talk so much. Do you know that if it is a bad speech it is not only your 10 minutes wasted, but also if there are 300 people, 10 minutes x 300 is wasted. The first thing you do is smile. If you smile they feel like talking to you - that is all you have to do. I will tell you one more thing. You are a girl - smile and you will not get wrinkles when you are old." That is how Swami has shared His love throughout my life.

WALK FOR VALUES IN CANADA

In the July 15th, 2004 issue of **H2H** we carried a report on the Walk for Values organized in 2004. It was the Sathya Sai School of Canada's second annual walk held in eight cities of Canada including the capital city of Ottawa. And now we have the report of the latest endeavour from Canada, in June 2005. When there is sincerity of purpose….God's grace is always there... and ideas begin to flow… read on.

The Sri Sathya Sai Baba Centre of Edmonton hosted their very first Walk for Values at 11am on Saturday, June 25, 2005 in a very busy location of Edmonton, close to their Centre.

The Walk for Values is a national project initiated by the Sathya Sai School of Canada in Toronto, as we already mentioned. **The purpose of the Walk every year is to raise Awareness of the Human Values and make the community a better, safer place to live.** In the words of Mr. S. S. Rao who was instrumental in organizing this year's event,

"The weather was perfect and our members and guests, excitedly gathered together for the 4.5 km walk. We had approximately 160 people participating in the Walk, including members from other spiritual organizations and religious groups and the public. A father and son on roller skates passing by spontaneously joined the Walk right from the start stating that this was a "great idea".

Many wore white T-shirts with the unique 'Walk for Values' logo, and a sticker on which ***walkers pledged to practice a value of their choice, as a personal commitment to transformation.*** *The popular ones were very inspiringly 'love', 'patience' and 'forgiveness'.*

Unlike other Walks, no money was collected for registration or participation. We were led by a float with a sound system playing recordings of value songs through residential and business areas and a marketplace. Our cheerful group of walkers held up banners and flags publicizing the human values of love, truth, peace, right conduct and non-violence in 3 languages, English, French and Spanish.

Seniors, children and babies in strollers made the Walk so much more pleasurable. People spontaneously showed their support, motorists honked approval of the messages on our banners; others came out to their apartment windows and their front gardens cheering us on, asking about the Walk and the Sai Centre. Since it was the week before Canada Day we distributed small Canadian flags to children and onlookers.

Our guest speaker was Ms. Yvonne Racine, a Minister from Unity Church. Yvonne spoke with admiration about the teachings of Swami, and the need to build our nation on the strong foundation of Values. She stated that she would gladly support any future public effort by the Sai Organization to promote Human Values.

We ended the event feeling a sense of joy and accomplishment in that we shared with the public our personal commitment to Sri Sathya Sai Baba to uphold His teachings of Love, Service and the Human Values. With Sai Baba's Loving Guidance this Walk was a great success. We anxiously look forward to more events of this kind and to our 2006 Walk for Values."

And the H2H Team wishes you all the very best from Prashanti Nilayam.

HUMAN VALUES ESSAY COMPETITION IN OMAN

"Spreading the Light Through Human Values"

H2H is very happy to bring you this issue's second report from the Gulf States (the first is in Feature Articles), this time concerning some creative work on human values undertaken by schoolchildren. It's been running for three years and it's about time that we heard about it. It is truly an idea to emulate and replicate all over the world.

"'Spreading the Light Through Human Values', an open essay writing and poster making competition, conducted by the **Serve And Inspire (SAI) Group** [the name by which the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organization, Oman is known to locals and government officials in Oman] has become a popular and successful event in the Sultanate of Oman.

The 14th of April 2005, witnessed the staging of this mega event for the third year in succession. Her Excellency, Dr. Muna Salim Al Jardany, Under Secretary for Education and Curricula, Ministry of Education inaugurated the event. It is notable that the event was conducted in close co-operation with the Ministry of Education, Sultanate of Oman.

The objective of the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV) programme is that the children will grow into nobler human beings with a well balanced personality. Through the competition, Swami's message, ***"The development of character is the real purpose of education"*** is inculcated in the hearts of every student.

Conducting creative competitions based on human values, greatly nurture and facilitate the blossoming of values from within a child. The participants research the topics by going through many books, listening to the guidance of their teachers and parents and by discussions with their classmates and friends. During this process they spend time contemplating on human values and such positive thoughts are reinforced in their sub-conscious minds. This helps them to grow into nobler individuals - a great gain for society and the nation, anywhere in the world.

820 students from 86 schools of different categories such as Omani Arabic Schools, Omani Bilingual Schools, International Community Schools and Special Education Schools participated in the competition. The value based topics that were given for both poster making and essay writing this time were "Kindness is Goodness" for ages 6 to 9, "Nature is the Best Teacher" for ages 9 to 12, "Watch Your Words" for ages 12 to 15 and "Service to Community" for ages 15 to 18.

After declaring the event open, Her Excellency, Dr. Muna Salim Al Jardany, said that she was thrilled to see small children thinking about such rich ideas, which even adults find intriguing. **She noted that when children have an idea and think about it for more than two weeks, they tend to absorb it in their personality and it thus reflects in their character.** Competitions such

as these help children's development better than learning from textbooks as their creativity is stimulated and they become involved in meaningful activities.

Mohamed Issa Al Zadjaly, Director, the *Times of Oman* observed that this excellent effort would greatly reduce the gap between communities by the opportunity to exchange ideas, views and feelings. The beautiful message is that though our passports may be different, we are essentially the same. He thanked the SAI Organization with its team of committed volunteers, as it is not at all an easy task to organize an event of this magnitude in Oman .

The meticulous judgment process, saw each entry reviewed by three judges independently. The elite judging panel had more than 40 professionals in the area of art and literature who were highly impressed with the creative work of the students.

The award ceremony was held on the 18th of May 2005, in a grand manner. His Excellency Mohammed Hamdan Al Toubi, Under Secretary for Educational Planning and Projects, Ministry of Education was the chief guest. A brochure which contained full details of the event, the activities of the SAI Group and a wealth of information on SSEHV was released on the occasion by the chief guest.

First, Second and Third as well as Consolation prizes were given in each age group and category of school. All the participating children were awarded with certificates and all the 86 participating schools were presented with SAI plaques. Truly Swami's message is growing in Oman.

DID GOD CREATE EVERYTHING THAT EXISTS?

The professor of a university once challenged his students with this question. 'Did God create everything that exists?' A student answered bravely, 'Yes, He did'. The professor then asked, 'If God created everything, then He created evil. Since evil exists (as noticed by our own actions), so God is evil. The student could not respond to that statement causing the professor to conclude that he had 'proved' that the belief in God was a fairy tale, and therefore worthless.

Another student raised his hand and asked the professor, 'May I pose a question?' 'Of course', answered the professor. The young student stood up and asked, 'Professor does cold exist?' The professor answered, 'What kind of question is that? Of course cold exists... haven't you ever been cold?'

The young student answered, 'In fact sir, cold does not exist. According to the laws of physics, what we consider cold, is in fact the absence of heat. Anything is able to be studied as long as it transmits energy (heat). Absolute Zero is the total absence of heat, but cold does not exist. What we have done is to create a term to describe how we feel if we don't have body heat or we are not hot.'

'And, does darkness exist?', he continued. The professor answered, 'Of course'. This time the student responded, 'Again you're wrong, sir. Darkness does not exist either. Darkness is in fact simply the absence of light. Light can be studied, darkness can not. Darkness cannot be broken down. A simple ray of light tears the darkness and illuminates the surface where the light beam finishes. Dark is a term that we humans have created to describe what happens when there's lack of light.'

Finally, the student asked the professor, 'Sir, does evil exist?' The professor replied, 'Of course it exists, as I mentioned at the beginning, we see violations, crimes and violence anywhere in the world, and those things are evil.'

The student responded, 'Sir, evil does not exist. Just as in the previous cases, evil is a term which man has created to describe the result of the absence of God's presence in the hearts of man.'

After this, the professor bowed down his head, and did not answer back. The young man's name was **ALBERT EINSTEIN**.

BEING WITH THEE - LEARNING TO BE

by Sri N B Vineeth
Former student of SSSIHL.

“We hear your Sai Baba gives gifts to people – chains, watches, rings and much more. What did your Sai Baba give you?" The boy looked up, and found five menacing pairs of eyes looking into his eyes, eagerly and expectantly.

The Toughest Moment

This boy had gone through what is the toughest moment of every Sai Student's life - to leave the portals of this hallowed Institution... to leave Him, rather, to leave His physical presence, for His Omnipresence always guides and guards each one of us. History will remember us not because we had any great property; history will remember us for we are His Property. History will not remember us, because we had any great possessions, but **history will remember us, for we are His Possession**. History will not remember us, because I am I, you are you or we are we; history will remember us, because we all are His.

And this boy was now sitting in front of an interview board in search of a job. And the question was, "We hear that your Sai Baba gives gifts to people - chains, watches, rings. What did He give you?"

What Greater Gift?

All that the student had to do was not to look at anything that was on his person, but to look at ‘himself”. The student looked up, smiled and said, "Sir, I hail from a poor village and if today, I sit in front of as great an interview board as yours, applying for an honourable post as this, **what greater gift can I ask for than what I have received from Sri Sathya Sai Baba, my entire education - totally free of cost.** " And needless to say perhaps, the student would by now be a part of the interview board of that prestigious company.

Yes, the student was right; and was wrong too. For education is not the greatest gift that we receive - rather, it is education with a little difference, education with lots and lots of care, ***'Educare'*** - in the words of our beloved Lord.

Jam Sandwich

For there are always two kinds of education. The one that makes a living and the one that makes a life. And the greatest gift that each of us here gets is this 'jam sandwich' - with one bread slice on the top - the education that teaches us how to make a living and the other bread slice below - the education that teaches us how to make a life. And in between, the best part of this sandwich - the sweetest of sweet jams - that is Him.

Let me take you students to the future ten years hence. Imagine how you would like yourself to be. There was a time when each of us had an ambition - he wanted to be a doctor, he wanted to be an engineer, I wanted to be a scientist... but today, the same he, the same I, envision a totally different future. **If he is to be a doctor, he now wishes to be a doctor who heals his fellow men. If he wished to be an engineer, he now wishes to be an engineer, who longs to serve his country.**

There are always two aspects to anything - the profession, and how you go about the profession. There was a time when to each of us the profession mattered. There was a time when being a doctor mattered, being a business tycoon mattered. But today, the vision is not to be a doctor, but to be a doctor who serves, serves and serves. There is a subtle difference. And to know what made the difference, all you need to do is to look at the stars of the night sky - not up above, but in the twinkle in His eyes we will see our answers.

And the way He brings about this transformation is totally unique and subtle. He teaches us that the greatest of the transformations is not brought about by force; **the transformation of the heart is not brought about by fire and ice; but by love and sacrifice.**

God Can Nullify Our *Karma*

Some years ago, there was a student who suffered from chronic asthma. Days and nights passed, but the simple joy of life - the sheer joy of breathing was never his. Come night, hard times would begin. For his heart was out at two jobs - his heart would pump hard, and his heart had to pray hard too. Needless to say, these hard times touched the soft Divine Heart.

One fine day, Swami called this student inside, and told him all about his problem. But then, Swami told him, "All this suffering is because of your *Karma*; and you cannot escape it." (A lesson to remember - even the Law Maker never breaks His own laws!) "See, if you were to continue this way you would be suffering all your life, but..." The student looked eagerly at Bhagavan. **"But if I were to suffer for you, it would just take little time to nullify the *Karma*."**

The student sat transfixed. How could his eyes see that form of love suffering for his sake? Even as he was about to plead, the student saw Bhagavan breathing deeply, and heard the whistle of His breath. Bhagavan had taken upon his asthma in front of the very same student. With moist eyes the student looked at the Divine form suffering. Minutes passed, and slowly, the shrillness of the whistle decreased, until there was silence in the room. **Bhagavan looked at the student, and the student was relieved for life.**

And that day, the student was transformed. For it is not the stick or the sword that transforms people, it is love and sacrifice. His love, His selfless sacrifice. And this 'jam sandwich' that He gives, is never limited to any particular group

of people. It is for each one to take a bite, digest and feel that he has truly grown.

Swami's Love for the Orphan Boys

For those of us who do not know, this *Guru Poornima* (2003) saw yet another chapter in the Divine Mission unveiled. Around 50-60 children who had been deprived of their parents were blessed to stay in the Deenajanodharana Padakam, situated behind the ashram.

These children have all their needs provided along with their education by Bhagavan. Sometime in August, just a month or two after the little children had come, one of the boys received a message from his relatives, saying that his uncle had passed away, and that he should rush home immediately. This boy had no parents, and now, his uncle too had passed away. As the relatives asked him to come home, this boy said, "No, I will not come."

The relatives were shocked. They pleaded with him to come, for it was his own uncle. But the boy sternly said, "No, I will not come. If you want, I will pray for his peace right here. **But I will not come. Swami is my mother and father.**" At the next opportune moment, when Bhagavan went to the Padakam, the Divine Mother materialised a chain for Her son.

The transformation that He brings about is never localised. It is for each one of us to bite into the 'sandwich', digest it and feel that we have grown. *[Heart2Heart had a cover story on Swami's orphanage in June 1st, 2004 issue.]*

The Lord's Abode

Long ago, when Bhagavan returned from the East Africa trip, Bhagavan was giving a discourse at Dharmakshetra, Bombay. Sri Kasturi was translating. Bhagavan then said *"Ee vishwame maa illu."* The translation went, "The world is my Mansion."

Swami sternly turned and said, *"Tappu* - mistake." Sri Kasturi wondered where he had made the mistake. He thought that perhaps he should have said, 'house' for 'mansion', for *'illu'* literally means 'house'. But as it always happens, the difference between man and God is where they see - the outside or the inside. Sri Kasturi had looked at the wrong word. Prompt came the translation from Bhagavan Himself: ***"The Universe is my Mansion" - not the World, the Universe.***

Yes, the Universe is His University. There is no one who is barred from His University that serves these 'jam sandwiches'. It is for us to take a bite, digest and feel we have grown, grow and then help someone else to grow.

The Story of the Pencil

Long ago, the Pencil Maker was making lots of pencils. As He made one exquisite pencil, the Pencil Maker turned to the little pencil and said, "Little one, no matter where you go, wherever you are, remember three things." The little pencil looked curiously at the Pencil Maker.

The Pencil Maker continued, "Firstly, remember that you are only worth something in this world, when you are held in someone's hand." "Yes, Master," said the little pencil. "Secondly, little one, remember, there are times when you will be sharpened with a blade or a sharpener...it will be painful, but remember this makes you a better pencil. And thirdly, dear one, remember, there are many pencils in the world like you. Some are fat, some are thin, some are white, some are black, some are tall, and some are short. But remember, the lead inside all these pencils is the same."

Yes, we are little pencils that become worthy only, when held in His Hand. We are sharpened now and then, and as we are sharpened, we become smaller - smaller not in size, but in ego. **For it is when we are smallest, that we lose our identity and fit wholly in the Divine Hand and become truly His.**

Courtesy: "Sai Prerana".

"YOU KNOW ME WELL"

This is an experience of one of our readers, Mr. Ariarajah, former Superintendent of Police in Sri Lanka and now settled in Melbourne, Australia. Here is the story in his own words.

In my school days I had a close friend by the name Garry Ramachandran. After leaving school I joined the Police Force and Garry got a scholarship to do Medicine in Russia. After qualifying as a doctor Garry migrated to Scotland and started his practice there. He got married to a Scottish lady by the name Gwen in 1981.

I was in Sri Lanka then and was residing in Colombo with my family. In September 1981 Garry came with his wife to visit Sri Lanka on a holiday. I was pleasantly surprised when I received a telephone call from him. He and Gwen were staying at a seaside resort in Wattala, some twelve miles from Colombo.

Garry invited me along with my family to join him and Gwen for dinner at the resort hotel. My wife and two children and I, including an aunt of ours set out at 8.00 p.m. to the hotel in my Mini Minor car. It was memorable evening together, and after a sumptuous dinner we parted at 11 p.m. to return home.

On our way back my car run out of petrol and came to a halt at an awkward place. The place was totally dark with no street lights. It happened to be a bad area with slums on one side and open sea on the other and quite risky for travelers at that hour!

We were fear stricken and I could only think of Bhagavan Baba and started calling His Name, “Sai Ram, Sai Ram, Sai Ram.” Then I asked my wife to remove all her jewelry for me to hide in the boot and got out of the car, opened the boot, hid the jewelry there and took out the empty petrol can that I generally keep in the car for such eventualities. I was getting ready to walk a distance of two miles to the nearest Petrol station and told my family to lock themselves inside the car and remain quiet until I returned.

Just then I saw a motor cycle heading towards me from the opposite direction, with a pillion rider. Both of them were dressed in full white. The rider stopped and asked me, “What is the problem?” and I told him that we were stranded without petrol. The rider asked his companion to stay with the car and asked me to get on his motor cycle. I sat behind him with the empty petrol can in my hands.

When we reached the nearest petrol station I was upset when I saw it was shut. The stranger took me to the next nearest station but that too was shut. Ultimately we found an open petrol station after traveling a distance of 10 miles. I bought a gallon of petrol and we were returning to my car. Along the way I was telling the rider a few things about myself, that I was a police officer, where I lived and so on, and told him that he should feel free to call me

for any help and I would never forget his assisstance at our time of desperation. But the rider never spoke a word.

No sooner did we reach my car, I filled my fuel tank and started the car without any problem. The pillion rider had got on to the bike and both men were about to take off. I quickly got out of my car to thank them for their help. I went up to the rider and thanked him once again and asked him for his name.

The rider turned towards me and surprised me saying, **"*You know me well,***" and rode off. Within 5 yards the motor cycle and the men disappeared into thin air!

It was a shocking experience. My thoughts were with Bhagavan and I shed tears of gratitude. Later, my wife told me that the pillion rider had advised them to lock the car and stay inside, while he stayed outside without speaking another word.

Our Lord had given us this unique experience that He is always with us, helping and protecting us, without our knowledge. Bhagavan has shown us His Omnipresence and Omnipotence in this miraculous instance, and given us the experience of His oft quoted statement:

"***If you take one step towards me I will take 100 steps towards you***."

THE FLAWED POT

A water bearer in India had two large pots, each hung on the end of a pole which he carried across his neck. One of the pots had a crack in it, and while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water at the end of the long walk from the stream to the master's house, the cracked pot arrived only half full.

For a full two years this went on every day, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots full of water to his master's house. Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, perfect for the end for which it was made. But the poor flawed pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream. "I am ashamed of myself, and I want to apologize to you." "Why?" asked the bearer. "What are you ashamed of?" "I have been able, for these past two years, to deliver only half my load because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your master's house. Because of my flaws, you have to do all of this work, and you don't get full value from your efforts," the pot said.

The water bearer felt sorry for the old flawed pot, and in his compassion he said, "As we return to the master's house, I want you to notice the beautiful flowers along the path."

Indeed, as they went up the hill, the old flawed pot took notice of the sun warming the beautiful wild flowers on the side of the path, and this cheered it some. But at the end of the trail, it still felt bad because it had leaked out half its load, and so again it apologized to the bearer for its failure.

The bearer said to the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of the path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I took advantage of it. I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walked back from the stream, you've watered them. For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my master's table. Without you being just the way you are, he would not have this beauty to grace his house."

MORAL: Each of us has our own unique flaws. We're all flawed pots in our own way. But if we will allow it, our flaws can be used to grace the human family's table. In God's great economy, nothing goes to waste. Yes... we are all flawed pots in our own special way and we do not always realize the joy we bring to others. We have an obligation to share whatever our goodness can bestow on others, so that the world can become a better place.

TWO SPIRITUAL QUIZZES

QUIZ 1

BLESSINGS OF DIVINITY…IN SEPTEMBER

Every month is special, for most of its days have been hallowed by Bhagavan's divine mission as anniversaries or divine festivals. As before, we have selected the current month, now **September**, and picked out some significant happenings in September, during which Swami has made His mark in His(own)story. Can you remember the years to match these important events?

Before to get started, a small reminder: The Quiz format is designed more to tell you than to test you, to tell you about the milestones in the life of our Lord. So, don't worry so much if you cannot get them all right, as you can teach yourself the answers and learn more about Swami simply by doing this quiz.

1. The Golden Chariot Festival was held to fulfil a scriptural prophecy. Swami blessed all from atop the chariot and later gave a discourse during which He said, *"Whether you believe or not I have no liking for such functions. What should be offered to Bhagavan is unsullied love...It is better to sell such objects and use the money for providing drinking water to the people."* When did this occur?
A. 1981
B. 1997
C. 1990
D. 2001

2. Swami visited Mysore for the first time when young in age and witnessed the *Dasara* Festival; when was this?
A. 1950
B. 1944
C. 1957
D. 1959

3. The Sri Sathya Central Trust oversees all of Swami's service activities such as the water projects, the educational and medical institutions etc. Swami commented on the Trust as follows, *"All these years, I have been personally supervising the day-to-day affairs of the Trust. Ever since my students have joined the Trust, they have taken up the responsibility and are doing a good job." (10-9-02)* When was it founded?

A. 1955
B. 1986
C. 1966
D. 1972

4. The National Symposium on Value Orientation was attended by Vice-Chancellors and educationists from all over India. In the Valedictory discourse

Bhagavan stated, "*The heart cannot be transformed by lessons in a classroom. The world cannot be changed by mere preaching. Only through action and practical example can the impulse for change be intensified."* What year was this?

A. 1981
B. 1999
C. 1987
D. 1984

5. H2H's cover story in the issue *Dec 01 2003* was on the 'Enchanting Festival' otherwise known as *'Dasara'* when Prashanti resounds to the priest's chanting of the Vedas for hours each day. This has been celebrated every year since its inception in…?

A. 1946
B. 1956
C. 1967
D. 1971

QUIZ-II

FAITHS OF THE WORLD

6. Zoroastrianism is an ancient religion. Which country did it originate from?

A. Greece
B. India
C. Persia
D. Turkey

7. In the Jain religion, what were the names of lord Mahavir's parents?

A. Suddhodana & Mahamya
B.Dhritarashtra & Gandhari
C. Siddartha & Trishala
D. Dasrath & Kaushalya

8. Where did Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba go to school at the age of 7 years?

A. Puttaparthi
B. Bukkapatnam
C. Whitefield
D. Dharmavaram

9. What presently stands in the birth place of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba? Is it:

A. Ganesh temple
B. Shiva temple
C. Rama temple
D. Krishna temple

10. In which state in India did Shirdi Sai Baba live? In the state of

A. Gujarat
B. Andhra Pradesh
C. Maharashtra
D. Madhya Pradesh

QUIZ ANSWERS

1B, 2B, 3D, 4C, 5A, 6C, 7C, 8B, 9B, 10C

THE HEALING TOUCH

BABA - THE PHYSICIAN

by Dr. B. SITHARAMIAH

This is a small excerpt from Dr. Sitharamiah's article published in the book "Sai Prescriptions".

As medical practitioners, we are surprised at the inexplicable series of cures that patients gain in the Sathya Sai Hospital, Whitefield, especially when it is remembered that some arrive at the Hospital after being rejected as incurable by all the major institutions in this country and abroad. Bhagavan's Love is showered on all those who suffer and who are handicapped in the race of life; He grants the gift of health, so that it may be used for really beneficial purposes.

If examples are needed to illustrate the unbounded Love of Bhagavan, I can quote the instance of a coffee estate owner from the Malnad, Mysore State. When he came to Prasanthi Nilayam he was suffering from rheumatoid arthritis of a multiple nature for the last 30 years, he had a high fever and one of his kidneys was not functioning.

Bhagavan ordered me to examine him and administer a few injections; but, though emaciated and confined to bed he would have nothing of me! He refused to have anything to do with any one of my profession; he said he had enough of them, allopathic, ayurvedic, homeopathic and the rest. He wanted only Bhagawan to treat him!

Bhagavan graciously complied. He created, by a wave of His Hand, a small bottle of liquid, and giving it to him, I asked that a few drops be taken in by him, mixed with water, twice a day. In ten days, he walked by himself on to the verandah of the Nilayam; within a month, he came into the Prayer Hall and fifteen days later, he was normal again!

The hospital records show that an old man came from Nellore afflicted by chronic diabetes (4 per cent sugar in urine) and sinuses in the arms. I planned to give him a course of insulin, but, Bhagavan came to the hospital and created *Vibhuthi* for him to swallow. The next day, I discovered to my surprise that there was no trace of sugar in his urine. The sinuses healed in less than three weeks; no more treatment was needed for diabetes. In three weeks, he was discharged in normal health, fully cured.

SSSIHMS STATISTICS

PUTTAPARTHI SUPERSPECIALITY HOSPITAL

Cumulative Statistics from 22nd Nov 1991 to 31st July 2005.

Heart Surgeries: 14,886

Cath Procedures: 15,538

Urology Surgeries: 26,902

Ophthalmology Surgeries: 26,483

CT Scans: 4,201

BANGALORE SUPERSPECIALITY HOSPITAL

Cumulative Statistics from 19th Jan 2001 to 31st July 2005.

Cardiac Surgeries: 5,577

Cardiac Catheterisation: 10,829

Neuro Surgeries:4,939

CT Scans: 16,102

MRI Exams: 18,416